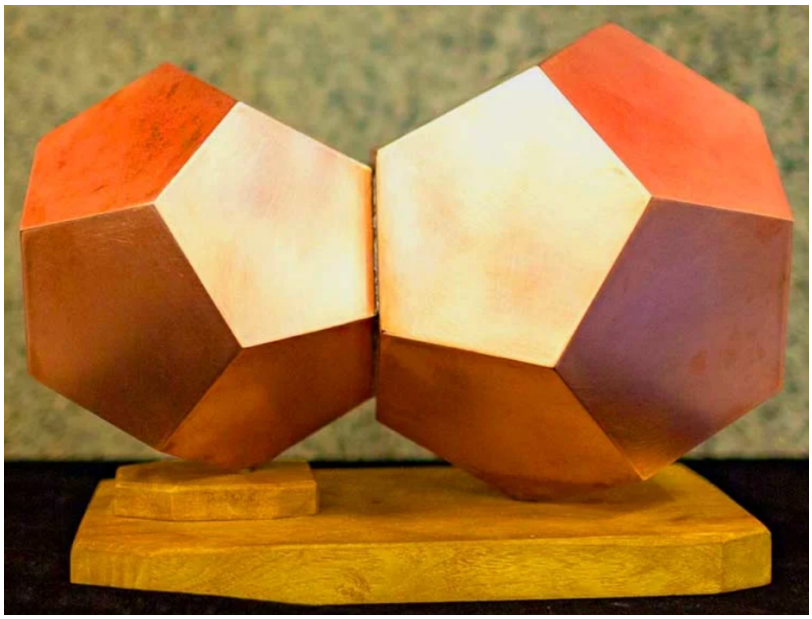
Spiritual Science: A Path to Truly Think, Truly Feel and Truly Live



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In Rudolf Steiner's Mystery Dramas we follow the soul trials of a tightly karmically connected group of individuals. In these 1910-1913 series of four plays Rudolf Steiner was the first to portray on stage scenes taking place in the spiritual world in which given individuals reach higher stages of knowledge through their dedication to a spiritual path of development. In an even more unprecedented stage première Rudolf Steiner dispays to the public how the practice of spiritual pursuit can eventually lead to the awakening of memories of previous lifetimes. These recollections focus around the karmic knots—the web of events that generated karmic debts for the present incarnations. Through these realizations the characters in the play have a better grasp of the strenghts and weaknesses that they carry in the present incarnation. Most of all they can see as objective entities the soul forces that they most rely upon and at times the Double or parts that have detached from it. The viewer has a graphic understanding of what it means to reach the threshold in relative balance of the soul in certain rare individuals. In many other instances they see how one-sidedness of soul generates a crossing of the threshold that is all but harmonious. In fact, when that is the case they have to receive the devoted help of other karmically related individuals.

The above set of phenomena is also mentioned by Rudolf Steiner in *How to Attain Higher Knowledge*.

> "What appears to be a harmless characteristic as long as its possessor is without esoteric training, namely, a predominance of thinking or feeling or willing, is so intensified in an esoteric student that the universally human element, indispensable for life, becomes obscured. Yet a really serious danger cannot threaten the student until he has acquired the ability to include in his waking consciousness the experiences forthcoming during sleep."[1]

And again:

> "These are the three ways of error into which the student can stray: (1) exuberant violence of will, (2) sentimental emotionalism, and (3) cold, loveless striving for wisdom. … It is essential for him that the three fundamental soul-forces, thinking, feeling, and willing, should have undergone harmonious development before being released from their inherent connection and subordinated to the awakened higher consciousness."[2]

The Mystery Dramas offer us a feeling for what happens in the instance in which the three soul forces have developed in very uneven ways. Obviously here we are also taking into account the impactful events of previous lifetimes, which could hardly be fully corrected in one incarnation.

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[1] Rudolf Steiner, *Knowledge of Higher Worlds and its Attainment*, chapter 8, The Splitting of the Human Personality During Spiritual Training.

[2] Rudolf Steiner, *Knowledge of Higher Worlds and its Attainment*, chapter 8, The Splitting of the Human Personality During Spiritual Training.

Nevertheless, we can notice the difference between someone like Maria, whose soul forces are closest to an ideal, parallel development, and someone like Capesius or Thomasius who are farthest from that ideal state of balance. For the two of them the crossing of the threshold is not a one time event, rather a continuum accompanied with setbacks, even the need for others, Maria in particular, to sacrifice for the possibility of their further progress.

In the last few years friends may have heard me say that anthroposophy has been in my experience what has taught me to truly think, truly feel and truly live, or rather what has started me on these three goals. I borrow these expressions from the Foundation Stone Meditation's first three panels, in the so-called "microcosmic section" of each stanza. The last sentences of the three microcosmic sections read: "And you will truly think in human spirit depths" (third stanza), "And you will truly feel in human soul's creating" (second stanza) and finally, "And you will truly live in human world-all being" (first stanza).[3]

Key to being able to claim to truly think, truly feel and truly live, is being able to differentiate the practices that lead to these end results, respectively Spirit Beholding (or Spirit Vision among others) in the third stanza, Spirit Mindfulness (or Spirit Awareness or Spirit Sensing among others) in the second stanza and Spirit Recollection (or Spirit Remembrance among others) in the first stanza.

We can thus say that walking the path of personal development consists in differentiating the three soul faculties and educating them through the three specific soul practices—Spirit Beholding, Spirit Mindfulness and Spirit Recollection—until we can reintegrate them anew.

It is obvious that covering these fields of inquiry is equivalent to trying to capture not just the whole of what anthroposophy has covered in its historical development, but also its untapped potential and what can further unfold in future developments. It would be a daunting task. It is enough therefore to indicate some examples in each field. For this purpose I will follow two approaches.

The easiest in this instance is to retrace my personal itinerary through anthroposophy and from there retrace the archetypes that differentiate the three spiritual practices and the resulting three soul activities in order to point to the universal behind the phenomena. The second approach will be to follow the documented path of a well-known anthroposophist whose soul development allowed him to walk the three paths in a state of balance. We will be exploring to that effect the work of Owen Barfield who has explored and written about the attainment of higher knowledge from a biographical perspective (*An Ever Diverse Pair*, *Unancestral Voice*), from his fairy tales

[3] For the purposes of what follows I have used the Foundation Stone Meditation translation by members of the Speech Association of North America, Revised July 1999, except for the terms Spirit Recollection, Spirit Mindfulness and Spirit Beholding that I have adopted over the years.

(*The Silver Trumpet* and *The Rose on the Ash-Heap*) or his more epistemological books (*Poetic Diction*, *Saving the Appearances*, *The Rediscovery of Meaning*, etc).

Part I

Finding my Way to the Three Soul Paths

Following the path outlined above has led me to recognize a first dimension of the question. Though we incarnate as human beings and take thinking, feeling and willing for granted, the Foundation Stone Meditation tells us that we haven't yet fully humanized and Christianized these soul faculties, or at least most human beings in our time haven't. And it was easy to recognize this in my biography. This also came with a corollary. One of these soul faculties may be naturally stronger than the others, another one may constitute a blind spot. We may have one or two strong suits and one blind spot, or one strong suit and two blind spots.

In my life the three fields presented themselves with a prominent passion in anything that leads to the experience of truly living. Meeting with anthroposophy in my twenties motivated me to embark on the path of truly thinking, and for years I brought side by side these two pursuits, though not at equal levels. When it came to truly feeling, not only did I have little incentive in answering the question—I also had little capacity to fully address it. When I put to rest the most burning questions concerning the first two paths, then the question of addressing the realm of feelings and devise a way to practice Spirit Mindfulness (Spirit Awareness, Spirit Sensing, etc.) came to the fore and I deliberately took up a particular methodology. I needed fifteen years to be able to distinguish clearly what this third path was and to be able to start to answer the question of what truly feeling may mean. Below I retrace what each path has meant for me to the best of my abilities.

Truly Thinking: An Example

The question of the transformation of our thinking is one to which Rudolf Steiner turned for most of his life. While it took its departure from the writing of *The Philosophy of Freedom* in 1894, the question was re-elaborated in depth in more spiritual scientific fashion in *The Boundaries of Natural Science* as late as 1920 to mention another important step along a continuum. This persistence speaks volumes about the importance of the topic. In effect what Steiner said in comparison about the transformation of the realm of feelings and of the will may pale in comparison and justify the dismisssal of the two realms' importance, and the little attention that the expressions "truly living" and "truly feeling" have received over the years.

Rudolf Steiner linked the question of thinking to matters of human constitution, occult physiology and human/cosmic evolution among many others. He linked it to the basic dualism that exists between the sense -organ human being and the thinking human being on one hand, and to the question of the Fall, the path of individuation and the possible future spiritually co-

creator role of the human being. Let us look at these in a short overview, starting from the problem of cognition residing in the formation of mental images.

When we bring a new object to our cognition something happens very fast, so much so that we generally don't notice it. We start by comparing it to the store of our internalized representations. Through the memories of similar representations and through [mental] associations we grope in order to find a concept that matches the new object. We either recognize what it is or give it a new name. And our thinking is constantly busy making sense of external and internal experiences and creating mental images. We can simply live our lives while increasing our store or mental images, but we can also realize that we have little to no understanding of where our thinking comes from.

The source of our thinking, its activity, is not represented in our internalized mental images. This is because thinking itself provides the basis for the building of all our mental images. Thinking remains a force, not a mental image, and we are only aware of its end results, not of the origin of its activity. We can't go back to the source because we continuously cover it up by an incessant flow of images, memories, mental associations, habitual will impulses. It is this constant activity that goes on while we are awake—it is in fact what keeps us awake. Once this activity ceases we fall asleep. All of this is supported by a craving for knowledge that is similar to all other cravings and desires, only better concealed from our consciousness. To move beyond it we need to cause the slightest disruption in this reflex mechanism, to create a pause between observation, thinking and the creation of mental images. To better understand this process we can inscribe in its larger macrocosmic counterpart, cosmic thinking, and how it is affected by the process of human individuation.

The forces that work at the fashioning of our bodies are those in which we are immersed from birth to adolescence. They are experienced as creative, cosmic formative forces and they are at the same time the forces of cosmic thinking. While they are building our body these cosmic formative forces are unconscious, they work unconsciously. In the first three years they give the child the ability to walk, speak and think.

When these forces have completed their work on the body, or at least the bulk of it, they are freed/emancipated from the upbuilding of bodily-organic functions to give birth to human thinking, feeling and willing. But now these forces have lost much of their primal impetus and bestow on us only weakened capacities. The depleted thinking that passes through the crucible of individuation, appears as the capacity to make sense of the world and elaborate concepts out of the forming of mental images. The loss of etheric vibrancy is the price we pay for the process of individuation and the attainment of human freedom.

Human individuation is part of an overall evolutionary process of cosmic individuation. The spiritual world undergoes this process through the

agency of the human being. Through it the human being becomes co-creator with the spiritual world in the process of world becoming. The isolation and limitation of individuality becomes the engine for a new, larger integration and death becomes the avenue for new, greater life. We cannot bypass this process. We must first embrace the forces that lead us to egoism, the forces that separate us from our birthright in the spirit, and this process can only take place on Earth. Each act of ordinary cognition means a dying for the spiritual stream of life forces that surround us but a birth in the direction of individuation and the experience of freedom. Naturally, another part of the stream of cosmic thinking remains available to maintain and rebuild the human body in a progressively weakening manner until death ensues.

Living on Earth comes with the danger of losing sight of our spiritual origin and destination, or refusing the process of incarnation with its corollary of egoism. The first is the Ahrimanic temptation, the second to the Luciferic one. Individuation implies finding our way to the Christ amidst the adversaries.

We cannot return to our home in the spirit before becoming a self-conscious, therefore cut-off individuality. We complete the process when we use our freedom to carry the fruits we wrest from incarnation back to the spiritual world. We offer a new creative contribution. Each individual who walks the path toward individualized cosmic thinking does not offer a mere repetition of uncounted, past contributions. His is a fresh contribution to the spiritual world, an act of co-creation.

To resume the whole, we can say that what was the life-filled process of unconscious body formation passed through the threshold of individuation to give us deadened human thinking, but also the possibility of re-enlivened, spiritualized thinking, the rebirth of cosmic thinking in the human being. It is one of the most important human tasks to find a bridge toward the cosmic thinking from which we originated. Now cosmic thinking, become humanized, can become self-conscious. Our individuation, a process of dying to the cosmic process, opens the door to a resurrection to the spirit through our re-enlivened thinking.

In my life, the transformation of thinking passed through a new understanding of natural science via Goethean science first and spiritual science second. Goethe’s scientific approach inaugurated a participatory method that goes beyond the ordinary deductive method and calls for the development of thorough observation and a creative thinking by which one can penetrate beyond the physical to the hidden, spiritual nature of the living organism. According to this method there is no need for anything other than the phenomena themselves—no need for speculation or hypotheses. The general, larger principle will emerge from the greatest diversity of observations and lead to primary phenomena, such as key polarities, and

ultimately to living realities or archetypes, such as the *ur-pflanze* (archetypal plant). The following will illustrate what is meant here.

Through Goethe I acquired a new understanding of the plant being expressed in the integration of polarities. The whole of the plant expresses its being in the tension between Earth and Sun: to the first belong the roots, buried out of sight, to the second the flowers and fruits whose pollen and essential oils spread in the whole environment. To the vertical tendency expressed in the stem responds the horizontal one expressed in the leaf. The two gestures reappear in the further metamorphoses of the plant's organs. To the horizontal dimension belong the calyx and the corolla, modified and enhanced expressions of the leaf tendency. To the vertical tendency belong stamens and pistils.

The plant expresses itself in a series of contractions and expansions. The most contracted form, and the richest in potential, lies in the seed. Thus, the giant form of the sequoia lies encrypted in a seed of less than 0.2 inches. The first expansion becomes that of the shoot. A first contraction is visible in the buds waiting for the right moment to open to the stimuli of sun and cosmos. The leaf expands anew and later turns its expression into sepals and petals. The expansion continues in the stamens, whose pollen spreads outside, either close at hand or carried by the wind at great distances. It continues in the fruit growing out of the ovaries. When the fruit withers the plant has completed its cycle in the most condensed of all forms, the seed, ready to start a new cycle of growth.

Light and darkness, levity and gravity, metamorphosis of the leaf form and stem form give way to enhancement of complexity of forms, colors, substances from root to fruit. These are the overall gestures allying metamorphosis to enhancement. The leaves themselves can show a diversity, with more filled out forms at the basis and more lanceolate ones toward the top. To the little differentiated leaf follow the petals of great diversity, colors and accompanying perfumes. The forms increase in complexity as we move up the stem.

Still through Goethean science we can recognize the general rule of the expression of the astrality of the plant toward the top. The forms give way to forms, colors and perfumes and these attract the astral element in the form of insect life, essential to pollination. But this is only a general tendency, that can be noticeably altered in the single examples. What of the carrot or beet, whose flowers express little differentiation and call but for little attention? Here it seems that the astrality is concentrated in the color and flavor of the root.

At another end of the spectrum we have the sage genus, whose prize lies in the concentration of essential oils. Here too we have tradeoffs in the expression of astrality, more specifically at the level of the flowers. *Salvia officinalis*, the standard bearer of the group, shows but modest flowers. All its potency is found in the essential oils. When the flower gains prominence,

such as in Scarlet Sage (*Salvia coccinea*) or Mexican sage (Salvia Leucantha) the essential oils recede.

The above are but cursory examples of how Goethean science enriches our perspective on the nature of the plant through its phenomenology. Goethe privileged and refined the perspective of sense observation. Through mere enhancement of observation we can reach a deeper understanding of larger, secondary phenomena around which primary phenomena are subsumed. Some examples were given above. Rudolf Steiner widened this perspective by bringing up to consciousness and full thinking what Goethe had done in a more spontaneous way. Even decades or a century after the German towering genius, few had been able to follow his footsteps. Rudolf Steiner made his approach more conscious and he expanded its scope.

We can go a step further through spiritual science, for example in recognizing the threefoldness of the plant in relation to the threefold human being. This threefoldness of the human being was gained to spiritual science through Rudolf Steiner's protracted spiritual research only around the year 1917. And here new doors open to observation and scientific application, for example in the pharmaceutical and medical fields.

Expressed in terms of its threefoldness the plant can be seen as an upside-down human being. The dualistic and mineral nature of the plant roots corresponds to the head of the human being, the most mineralized part of the body, both in its bone and its nerves. Human ordinary thinking mirrors in its expression the dualistic nature of root growth. Each root spreads through repeated forming of two roots out of one. Purely analytic thinking recognizes the quantitative element alone which is mirrored in the analogues of 0 and 1, endlessly repeated in computer science.

To the realm of the heart and lung belongs the element of rhythm and repetition of same elements. The beat of circulation and breathing is mirrored in the repetition of the leaf element around the stem. Both lung and leaf breathe with the environment. Both leaf and heart diffuse the liquid element throughout the corresponding bodies—sap in plant, blood in the human being.

Finally, the metabolism feeds off what comes to the organism from the external world, sustaining the life of the human organism. To the pole of form in the upper body responds the pole of life in the lower organism. In the plant the upper part feeds off the rest of the plant. It produces that which is essential for the continuation of life; the fruit and the seed. The leaf produces the substance; the flower and fruit consume it. In the lower part of the human body we find likewise the reproductive organs.

Through a spiritual scientific understanding of the plant we can now start to discern what plants, and which of their specific organs, can address physiological needs disturbed by illness. Through a spiritual scientific understanding of homeopathy we can further extract from the plant, not just the substances—rather isolate the formative forces that the body needs for its healing. The potentizing of the substances has the effect of strengthening

the expression of cosmic formative forces, while diluting, even eliminating physical substances. The pure force in its nascent stage is then offered to the body for therapeutic purposes.

Granted, the above is a very quick overview of processes that can be, and have been, expressed at great length and detail. The outline presented here suffices to show how phenomenological and spiritual scientific perspectives vastly widen the reach of the natural sciences and bridge the abyss of the purely spectator consciousness of modern natural science. The human being can see the macrocosm reflected in his soul. The natural world is connected to, and is an extension of, the microcosm of the human being.

Truly Living: Befriending our Karma

What I will advance here has been spelled out in great detail in various places.[4] I will therefore only speak about it in broad outlines. Thinking and willing constantly interpenetrate each other. What we have seen above, the path of truly thinking, can be expressed more fully and precisely as the path of thinking through the will. What we will turn to at present, truly living, can be more fully articulated as the path of willing through thinking. The great difference between the path of thinking through the will and that of the will through thinking is that one leads us to the macrocosm, the second one to the microcosm, or life of the soul.

What lives outside of our soul can be directly observed in the external world. This accurate and meticulous observation is the foundation of a modern spiritual science. The designation Spirit Beholding or Spirit Vision captures this dynamic quite simply. The beholding or vision is a seeing/observing with the eyes of the spirit through a transformed faculty of thinking. This is the path to the macrocosm that is followed in Goethean science and brought a step further in the spiritualization of scientific knowledge. Goethe has led us to phenomenological science, while Steiner took a step further through the attainment of sense-free thinking and the move from natural science to spiritual science through phenomenology. He did what Goethe could not yet accomplish: shed light on our thiking activity and offer the means to spiritualize it.

The path to the microcosm lies on another foundation. What lives in our soul can only be observed after the fact. The drives, instincts, motives, resolves that live in the soul impel me to act and I can only observe the results of their activity after the fact. In recollecting I call on the faculty of memory. Hence, in this instance I am one step removed from direct observation. Just as I can train my faculty of observation so can I train my faculty of memory, first of all by using it regularly. This is what lies at the foundation of the designation Spirit Recollection or Spirit Remembering.

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[4] See Luigi Morelli, https://millenniumculmination.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Steiners-Karma-Exercises.pdf or https://millenniumculmination.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/spirit-recollection-journey.pdf

The stages I will lay out in what follows are like stepping stones on the path of deeper and deeper remembering, which ultimately points us further and further back in time. The ultimate reach of this remembering is to awaken memories of our previous lifetimes. Mind you, these are just discrete memories of some previous lifetimes, not whole panoramas. We can deepen the biographical understanding of who we are as far as our karmic being in time is concerned.

In what follows we will give examples of exercises arranged in a certain progression of difficulty or of the desired goal. We go from strengthening our memory to connecting more deeply with our higher Self and even to connecting with our karmic being.

The first step is that of the rückschau, a simple sequential remembering devoid of judgment. Classically, we use the rückschau at the end of the day to retrace in reverse sequence, even reverse motion, the course of the day. A different kind of memory is awakened. Though not meant specifically for this purpose the remembering may cast a different light on how we have seen some events in the moment. We sharpen in effect our presence to what happens around us. We will become more present to what life presents, more attentive to the people we see, things we say or do. The moral/evaluation element enters in after the fact and with repeated practice. We can't help but notice what we otherwise do unconsciously.

In a further step, still based on simple retrospective observation, we learn to see ourselves or other people both more fully and more objectively. The principle upon which this is based has been explained by Rudolf Steiner in the idea that we are trying to bring up into our consciousness what lives in the night when we are truly social, but unfortunately not aware of ourselves. This gift of the night is the work of Imagination but undergone unconsciously. We bring it to consciousness by trying to overcome the dualistic tendencies of likes and dislikes, sympathies and antipathies. We strive to create imginations, by "spiritually painting" other people. And this extends to ourselves and the parts of ourselves that we don't see objectively, but submit to the play of sympathy and antipathy. Let us see how, both in relation to ourselves and to other important individuals in our lives.

When it comes to ourselves an exercise calls us to look retrospectively at phases of our lives.[5] We do so by placing time boundaries to our recalling (e.g.: early childhood, adolescence, our years in higher education, our first job, etc.) and looking back at ourselves as if we were altogether another individual. We practice the detachment of spectator consciousness; we objectify ourselves in front of our own eyes. We then call to memory how this individual looked like in the physical body and then in all other sheaths: etheric, astral and ego. In schematic terms we can go through the life of the temperament, the life of habits that the person displayed, the planetary

[5] Rudolf Steienr, *Social and Anti-social Forces in the Human* Being, lecture of December 6, 1918.

characterological dispositions if even so slightly different from the present perspective. To the above we can add soul moods and the unconscious message that colored them, the prevailing practical activities, the areas of interest and among those the ones that carried the deepest motives, the life questions that stimulated research, the karmic patterns that tended to repeat themselves. The list is endless and goes to show that we will need some sort of systematic approach not to get lost in our memories.

The same can be repeated in relation to another person.[6] Here too we could look at the expressions resulting from the four sheaths—physical, etheric, astral, ego—and the intersections between one and another. By placing ourselves into a spectator mindset, separate from our feelings of sympathy and antipathy we start building a more objective imagination that can grow over time. We humanize the other human being and allow him/her to continue to evolve personally and grow in our conscience in freedom.

The result of the two parallel practices is that over time we may realize the futility of dualistic judgments and start to question our need to find an answer to questions that are ultimately too large to be answered when they involve a human being. The habit may grow of withholding judgment and appreciate that our guessing is wrong in many more instances than the reverse.

The following will come naturally on the heels of the previous experiences. If we can withhold judgment about ourselves and others, it may be relatively easy to accept that events in our lives are not random results of hazard, that they do not originate from without and thus can be attributed to other people or to sheer chance. The thought will come sooner or later that we are all responsible for our lives to a much higher degree than common wisdom dictates. The so-called "lesser karma exercise" works in this direction.[7]

In the practice of the lesser karma exercise I envision with strength that an event that I have not desired was actually devised by the "second human being" in me. This takes the concrete form of devising step by step and in great detail how this second being has brought about the exact event that I'm referring to. What starts as a contrived perspective gains more and more inner legitimacy over time. After some time we may not look at our life in any other way than by taking full responsibility for what it brings us, exception made for natural or manmade catastrophes or acts of extreme or deliberate evil.

In what forms an apex for this exploration we can resort to another step, that of fathoming what comes from previous lifetimes. Examples for it are the "greater karma exercise" and the "Saturn/Sun/Moon exercise."[8] Let us

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[6] Rudolf Steiner, *Inner Aspect of the Social Question*, lecture of February 4, 1919.
[7] Rudolf Steiner, *Esoteric Christianity and the Mission of Christian Rosenkreutz*, lecture of January 30, 1912.
[8] Rudolf Steiner, *Karmic Relationships*, volume 2, lectures of May 9, 1924 and May 4, 1924.

look at the first one. Immagine that an event has impacted you in such a way that you intuit or feel moved by its importance. You can then review it in as much detail and as exactly as possible the very same day and take it into your sleep. If you repeat this exercise over the next two following days the event will impress itself from the astral (first night) into the etheric and eventually impact you in the physical body. Steiner describes that after repeating this exercise over time you may eventually feel enveloped in a certain mood and by certain images, almost as if imprisoned by them. From these derives the inner feeling that the images belong to you in a lawful way. The exercise may not yield results for a long time. But when it does you will retrieve images from a previous lifetime. No doubt, the reason for needing to persevere is that it takes a certain threshold for being able to accept what, after all, reveals our one-sidedness and our past shortcomings. What we find often requires strength for reassessing and redirecting our soul forces in the present. Rudolf Steiner shows us in his Mystery Dramas how people are affected by these memories—for example how differently Maria, Johannes Thomasius and Capesius emerge from the recollection of a same lifetime lived in western Austria in the proximity of the Templar impulse during the fourteenth century. For some, Capesius and Johannes Thomasius in particular, the experiences prove very painful and require time to be integrated.

From the above progression of exercises—from the simple rückschau to the greater karma exercise—we can see that although we make appeal to a different faculty than in Goethean science, memory in this instance, we are still in the realm of Goethean observation, that of letting phenomena—those retrieved by memory in this instance—speak for themselves and refraining from letting likes and dislikes, sympathy and antipathy color our judgments. The practice of Spirit Recollection eventually leads us over time to a different presence in the here and now. To that we will return at the end of our exploration.

Truly Feeling: Working with the Calendar of the Soul

The path of the middle is one in which we bring macrocosm and microcosm in dialogue. We are neither fully in one or the other but we can bridge the two. If the path of Spirit Beholding is the Saturn Path to the macrocosm and Spirit Recollection the Moon path to the soul or microcosm, we can argue that the Path of Spirit Mindfulness is the Sun Path lying equidistant between the two.

The Calendar of the Soul was from its inception a pursuit of an artistic nature, or at the very least a pursuit woven through and through with an artistic intention and quality. The Calendar was partly the result of the close collaboration between Rudolf Steiner and Imma von Eckardstein. As in various other instances, her questioning made his initiative possible.

Imma von Eckardstein was born in 1871 in Luneville, close to Nancy, France. From early on she displayed an artistic inclination. She decided to

study art at an academy and through her teacher, Joseph Rolletscheck, she met Rudolf Steiner in Weimar. She soon joined the circle of his esoteric pupils and was interested in the Mystery Dramas. On this occasion she designed costumes and sceneries. She was also part of the painters working on the cupolas of the First Goetheanum, contributing to the paintings that linked the large and the small cupolas.

Rudolf Steiner entrusted Imma the task of working with the mysteries of the zodiac through private instructions that took on the character of esoteric lessons. With Steiner she went to Trieste—probably on occasion of the birth of the inspiration for the Calendar—and here Steiner instructed her on how to study the constellations in relation to the rising sun. This meditative work, transformed into artistic drawings, was then incorporated into the 1912/13 Calendar.

In December 1911 Steiner announced the forming of a "Foundation for Theosophical Art" (*Stiftung für Theosophische Kunst*) and attended its first meeting. Unfortunately, this was the only meeting of the foundation. The Calendar was the first and only initiative to come out of this effort. Due to problems with one of the founding members the association was soon dissolved.

What we can see in the Calendar's history is restated by Steiner in his first preface to the Calendar itself. In his words: "… the human spirit can be experienced in the context of the changing moods of the year from week to week and the soul's weaving can be found in images gained through impressions of the course of the year. *The aim is self-knowledge through feeling*. Through the verses expressing the characteristic mood of the respective week, this *'feeling self knowledge'* can experience the timeless cycle of soul life in relation to time. It needs to be clearly stated that the intention is to create potential for a path of self-knowledge." (emphasis added)[9]

My immersion in the verses of the Calendar of the Soul has revealed a number of things. What remains shrouded in one verse can be illuminated by another verse or a series of them. A theme can offer a backdrop or tone to a whole series of verses and open an understanding to the qualities of a month or season. An example: cosmic life appears in different terms such as joy of growth, force of cosmic life, spirit's life,germinating power, … from verses 47 of late winter to verse 5 of spring. Here the awakening of the life and tone ethers sets the tone for the time leading to Holy Week and Easter and immediately following. On the other hand we live in cosmic light from verse 1 through Ascension and Whitsun up to verse 12, while cosmic life is still interwoven with it. At the other end of the season the lead-up to Christmas is interwoven with the rise of cosmic Word (from verse 36) and of warmth of heart and related qualities (from 38 to 43 and in some ways up to 48).

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[9] Rudolf Steiner, *Preface to the First Edition* [of the Calendar of the Soul]" in Rudolf Steiner, *The Anthroposophical Calendar of the Soul*, Translation by Richard Steel.

The experience of the Calendar cannot proceed in the orderly way of a spiritual scientific study. What we have failed to understand at one season of the year requires that we patiently sustain a better understanding of the rest of the year before we return to the specific, same verse during the next year. Here we have a cyclical progression in our understanding.

For many of us working on the Calendar the penetration of the being of the year can be integrated through an analytic understanding of the words and lines in conjunction with a feeling understanding of the qualities conveyed in the verses. And we can also move a step further through the help of art. What we start to awaken through meditation can be supported through the artistic rendition of the verses. This has particularly been the case for me with Karl König's paintings. In fact, the artistic awakening can at times precede the cognitive realization. A particular image, result of König's imaginative insight, can open the door to new flashes of insights before the intellectual understanding has completely integrated them.

At times the insights that emerge through a sequence of verses—like those leading to and following a major festival—can be mirrored in the sequences of drawings. Two languages accompany each other, each in their own independent and legitimate way. The language of art mirrors and complements the language of personal, living understanding, when there is no immediate "translation tool" from one to the other, other than in our unfolding imaginative consciousness.

The result of the whole work with the Calendar changes my own relationship as a human being to the cosmos. In this relationship, however, the human being is not the individual of a specific biography, as it would be in Spiritual Recollection, rather the universal human being as she relates to the universal rhythms of the cosmos. As a human being I feel a citizen of the cosmos, I feel part of its rhythms, whether these be weekly, seasonal, yearly, the rhythm of incarnation/excarnation, or further rhythms of evolution spanning from a distant past to a distant future. What lives of Occult Science in my mind, can weave in my feelings and reach my heart through the Calendar, transforming ordinary feelings into objective feelings dictated by macrocosmic objective contexts. An example at a smaller scale: what I feel in winter will be colored and dominated by very different feelings than what lives in summer. In this regard the Calendar may help me sense and live the reality of the virtues that Rudolf Steiner attributed to each of the twelve months/signs of the year.[10] These objective feelings will raise my consciousness and help me mitigate and transform the impact of personal feelings associated with my biography.

Transforming the realm of feeling serves me then in two directions. On one hand it brings the enlivened life of feeling to meet me in the direction of the living thinking I create in Spirit Beholding. An example: in the Calendar of the Soul I can see in broad brushtrokes the life of the festivals or the

[10] Although confirmed by Rudolf Steiner, the so-called "monthly virtues" originated from the work of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky.

contents of *Occult Science* accompany me in the course of the year, in what is obviously a very different approach. On the other hand my personal biography is expanded in a larger direction. While I remain conditioned by what I haven't yet overcome in family karma or environmental and cultural conditioning, I can gain a foothold on the other side of the threshold as a denizen of something much larger, even if I will only fully realize it in future times.

With the path of Spirit Mindfulness we are bridging the gap between what is fully universal, and supra-human in Spirit Beholding to what is completely human, and even individual, in the path of Spirit Recollection. What is universal/cosmic in the first and completely personal in the second becomes the realm of the universal human experience in the path of truly feeling.

The path of Spirit Beholding addresses what becomes completely conscious and helps us to cross the threshold. In the path of Spirit Recollection we remain on this side of the threshold since we are most unconscious in what concerns our will. However, we establish a right relationhsip with the threshold. We accomplish that request of spiritual development that each step of knowledge be accompanied with three steps of moral development. Moreover, we tread a direct path of social development for which all human beings have the same potential.

In Spirit Beholding we develop a faculty of thinking at diverse degrees of development stemming from our karmic inheritance. Some may be closer to the goal than others though all can develop new faculties. What meets us in this consciousness reveals that the world is full of meaning, and that with discipline and constancy we can uncover layer after layer of it. Eventually we can in thinking abolish the barrier between perceiver and object and perceive our ideas while partaking of the world process.

In the path of Spirit Mindfulness we can develop artistic faculties or perceptions that have their origin in the unconscious, but whose fruits we lift to consciousness. These faculties are most visible in the true artist but are also accessible to those who want to develop true appreciation for art and deepen their artistic feeling.

The Three Paths in Review

To my knowledge the question of differentiating betwee truly thinking, truly feeling, truly living has not been addressed in any exhaustive way in anthroposophical literature. This could be due to a variety of cultural conditionings which should now be addressed. The undeniable fact that the modern human being can only truly cross the threshold to the spiritual world through the transformation of thinking has led to the misconception that Rudolf Steiner may have said, or implied, that we need solely concern ourselves with our thinking, or a step further, that trying to transform our

feeling, and especially our will, is a question frought with dangers that better be left alone.

The above leaves us short in relation to the reason for being called to practice three paths of tranformation and not just one, namely Spirit Beholding. It also leaves unanswered the question as to why the Foundation Stone Meditation refers to truly thinking, truly living and truly feeling, if truly thinking is all that we need. Finally, as we have seen, the above objections run counter to the fact that Rudolf Steiner has expressly outlined at least one path of self-knowledge through feeling in the instance of the Calendar of the Soul. It also leaves in a grey, undefined area, all the exercises through which he has given us a means to transform our will in apprehending more fully and consciously the forces at play in our biographies. This refers to what I have called "karmic exercises"—which in effect transform the tenor of our will by shedding on it the light of thinking. It is true, however, that the Foundation Stone Meditation does not speak of "truly willing." It stops short at truly living, confirming that the will can only be transformed to a minor degree in relation to thinking and even in relation to feeling.

In other places Steiner has spoken of the possibility of fully acting out of the free will, of truly willing out of the sphere of intuition in the case of so-called "free deeds." These are momentous, sacrificial deeds that the initiate accomplishes for the furthering of world evolution. One such free deed was Rudolf Steiner's embracing of the task that Karl Julius Schroër had left undone. The second one was the decision leading to the Christmas Meeting, leading to the very same Foundation Stone Meditation. For all non-initiates truly willing remains otherwise a far distant goal.

At the end of the first part of this exploration I return to the question I asked myself at the beginning. If it is true that spiritual science is the ultimate path of transformation of the soul forces, and if it's a path of differentiation and integration, what are the effects that can be detected at each specific level through the three transformational practices? This can be done by comparing a before and an after, even if the comparison is only a milestone check, a part of a continuum, not an ultimate assessment.

The easiest way to go about it is for me to contrast the paths of Spirit Recollection and Spirit Beholding first, then to return to the middle path of Spirit Mindfulness. The two first paths are related to each other as polar opposites. Whereas the path of Spirit Beholding makes appeal to the transformation of thinking through the will, the path of Spirit Recollection calls on the transformation of our will through our thinking. Whereas the first puts us in touch with the universal aspect of our human condition and our individuality, the second one refers to what is unique and differentiated in time and space about our individuality.

In the first instance thinking is transformed because we move away from associative thinking to living thinking. Associative thinking is that familiar thinking—very common in modern sciences—where a spontaneous

association of ideas gives rise to a hypothesis, which is then easily assumed to represent an objective truth. Sense-free thinking, on the other hand, can only arise when thinking rests on accurate observations and the conceptual links that bind them together. The plethora of secondary observations can then cluster around primary phenomena, whose interconnections speak to us and point to archetypes. The phenomena, speaking for themselves, point us to the spiritual reality pervading them. No inferences, nor speculations are then needed to penetrate to an objective ground of being.

In the first instance, that of Spirit Recollection, our will is tranformed because a comprehensive thinking looks back at the product of our actions and detects what would continue unaltered until their motives, patterns, threads are exposed. Then thinking can guide our actions and alter our dispositions, our natural proclivities, etc.

We can return to the above contrast and deepen it, making recourse ot the polarity between the Moon Path (of the will through thinking) and the Saturn Path (of thinking through the will) as Rudolf Steiner described them in the year 1923. The Moon path is the one in which "one can advance on the opposite side [microcosm] by entering deeply into the will, to the extent of becoming wholly quiescent, by becoming a pole of stillness in the motion one otherwise engenders in the will."[11] Instead of becoming an unconscious part of world movement, one can consciously come to a standstill. Through this "one succeeds in keeping the soul still while the body moves through space; succeeds in being active in the world while the soul remains quiet; carries activity, and at the same time quietly observes it; then thinking suffuses the will, just as the will previously suffused thinking [in the Saturn Path]." This path allows the individual to separate the will from the physical body. "One learns to say 'You harbor in your will sphere a great variety of drives, instincts and passions. But . . . they belong to a different world that merely extends into this one, a world that keeps its activity quite separate from everything that has to do with the sense world.'"

In practical, personal terms, this means being able to look at even the most impactful events in my life with a certain amount of reserve. It means not identifying fully with my earthly ego and its external melodrama, but live with the consciousness that something larger is taking place, which could allow me to come closer to an understanding of my karmic being and of what it needs to develop in order to evolve. No matter how unpleasant a reality may be, part of me can see it with detachment and know that it is necessary and it will yield its fruits. If I strengthen my observer consciousness the events in my life will lose their intensity and make room for a detached trust, curiosity and acceptance.

When I look at the people in my life, I can likewise gain detachment, and lessen dependence from or animosity toward them. I can more clearly form imaginations of who they are, and in so doing withhold judgment and allow them to offer me further revelations of their deeper, truer being. Difficult

[11] Rudolf Steiner, Awakening to Community, February 6, 1923 lecture.

as it may be, I can gradually master the need to come to conclusions and, in a further step, realize the sheer futility of interpreting other people and their actions. I may live more contentedly in the realization of not knowing, which allows me and others to continue to grow, rather than crystallize judgments that tie us one to the other without freedom.

Another important change lies in how I can live in relation to my future. If I can lessen judgment and anticipation toward the future I will be able to respond to the moment with a larger openness to the inspiration of the spiritual world. This gives substance and meaning to the otherwise trite expression of "being present in the here and now." If I can ready myself to what the moment brings I can clearly live in the reality of "Behold, I make all things new."

Finally, a deeper personal penetration of the mysteries of karma and reincarnation offers me a whole other dimension of understanding, a new place in the world. As long as I abstractly believe in the beneficial influence of karma, I may keep at bay the often shattering realization of how karma applies to myself. It is a fact that in Steiner's karmic exercises, for example the Lesser Karma Exercise, what meets us first in our consciousness are images of our shortcomings, of our Double. This early meeting with our Kamaloca is, more often than not, unpleasant. It obliges us to reassess, to step back, to humble ourselves. It is highly sobering and deflationary.

When we overcome guilt and self-reproaches and embrace ourselves with all our limitations, two polar movements take place. We diminish in self-importance to our own eyes and we gain greater empathy for our fellow human beings. This has changed my perspectives on the "curse" of the Michaelites having to reincarnate faster than the rest of the population in our time. I tended to read it as a double handicap; not only do we seemingly incarnate unprepared, but we also have an extra burden to carry. While this may be partly true, it is possible to experience, and I have, that what I know of myself that unites me with my Double, is what binds my lot to that of humanity at large. While I strive to transform the Double I cannot claim to stand above the human lot because of my knowledge of anthroposophy. I can enlarge my sphere of belonging to all realms of pain and alienation—to the lot of humanity after the Fall—to which I can relate at least in part from personal experience. Accepting the shortcomings of myself and others and walking alongside as a peer becomes easier.

Finally, I will only hint to the most advanced exercises such as the Greater Karma exercise or to the Moon/Sun/Saturn exercise, which can put us in touch with the theme of reincarnation, concerning ourselves or other people. These exercises can allow us to cross the threshold, though only as a one-time event. In relation to myself these very, very rare occurrences have had the effect of strengthening a sense of the karmic stream(s) to which I predominantly belong. Here the same can be said about differentiation and integration that has been pointed to in the larger context of the three soul practices. The glimpses we can glean about our karmic being help us reinforce a connection with our pre-birth resolves, such as

those of bringing forward a continuing, evolving and metamorphosing task. We can then find deeper resolve and affirmation without needing to seek it from our environment. Conversely, once we fulfill the needs that we carry in relation to our stream we will naturally tend to want to integrate what comes from other streams, with which we need to unite our work. An example: if we recognize our belonging to a Platonic stream, and have found a continuation of that impulse in our biography, the time will come when we will naturally want to integrate the modalities of other streams within our soul, e.g. a more Aristotelian way of being in the world. Conversely, if we haven't found validation of our stream, inwardly or outwardly, frustration and lack of fulfillment may lead us to fight against the impulses of other streams.

We can look at the path of transformation of thinking through the will (Spirit Beholding) as the polar opposite movement to the above. To refer to the Saturn path, or path of thinking, Steiner took his start from the Philosophy of Freedom. There he described the process through which thinking is resurrected from a passive activity (abstract thinking), into a path of perception of the spiritual, when the thinker tries to apprehend the relationship between thinking and himself [which Steiner characterized as pure thinking]. Steiner describes "how the will strikes into the otherwise passive realm of thought, stirring it awake and making the thinker inwardly active."[12] This is the path that takes the human being beyond Saturn into the universe (the path to the macrocosm).

I will refer here to the consequences of taking the path of Spirit Beholding as a part of my life. The education of thinking through the will has rendered concrete the experience of polarities at play in all of the world's manifestations. This makes it easier to refrain from interpreting reality hastily. When I hear of a strongly charged topic in sciences or in the social realm, I know I will sooner or later be exposed to two opposite sides. Examples of it in the scientific realm could be instances related to health or to the environment. In one instance it may be the hypothesis of contagion, in the other the prevailing theories about climate change. To the theory of contagion can be countered that of terrain, closer to homeopathy or more holistic approaches to health. To the claims of climate change we can find opposed those of the maligned "climate deniers." In thinking things through to the end I must refrain first and foremost from taking sides. At times I may already be close to the answer because I have already thought things through and because the answer may be conveniently found some way between the two sides because the polarity is obvious. At other times the polarity may present itself in much less purer terms. I will have to live with uncertainty, see even ignorance, for a long time until new information allows me to place myself in a new existential relationship to the sides of a polarity. In the intervening time I face the discomfort of not being able to

[12] Rudolf Steiner, Awakening to Community, February 6, 1923 lecture.

offer an opinion where everybody seems to be dead certain one way or the other.

Thinking in polarities also opens the door to being able to think external imaginations through. This is a step different from reaching Imaginative consciousness. Especially in thinking in a historical/metahistorical fashion, the archetypal nature of things has revealed itself to me in the language of fairy tales, myths or legends. This means penetrating behind the veils of maya through the agency, not of my Imagination, but of another objective Imagination bestowed on us from the spiritual world, most often through the agency of a human being. I've made this case for Barfield's tales (*The Rose on the Ash-Heap* and *The Silver Trumpet*), for Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* or for the Mayan *Popol Vuh* and others. History acquires another dimension and depth when it is accompanied by the help of a spiritual record, as it were. We can become able to see the larger tapestry at work through the help of the archetypes of an imaginative document.

Another level of perception is also possible in relating to operational archetypes. In many places I have referred to the paramount importance of the archetype of the seven life processes in all healthy social hygiene. Through the experience of social processes, many of which have been dubbed "social technology", it becomes obvious that we cannot proceed and expect success in the social realm if we don't invite the whole human being to the table, and do not invite the whole spectrum of possible perspectives. When the contrary takes place the experience of working against spiritual reality becomes pervasive. And attempts to work in incomplete ways seem futile. The soul becomes able to differentiate whether we are working with or against a larger, objective archetype.

Moving on further with examples, the world of polarities stems from the ultimate polarity described in *The Philosophy of Freedom* (or *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*). That the human being perceives only manifestations that seem at first irreconcilable, or at least mysteriously linked between each other, is due to the inherent human organization which receives/produces separately percepts and concepts. This is what gives rise to the alienated spectator consciousness on one hand but also to the possibility of freedom on the other hand. Tirelessly working at uniting percepts to concepts through an activated thinking is what allows us to overcome this dichotomy by strengthening our thinking and rendering it independent of the instrument of the physical brain.

To conclude then, even before reaching the state of imaginative consciousness our thinking is already qualitatively changed by living in the world of polarities and archetypes, by subduing attachment to opinions and fixed ideas, or even the need to have an answer. The careful research into facts and events can lead us from the physical realm to apprehending the world of archetypes and see their manifestations in the world.

Finally, we can now approach the realm of truly feeling, which intuitively we can sense midway between the two paths above. I can only describe the effects of this path on my life from the limited perspective I have reached through the Calendar of the Soul.

The Calendar asks me to live in a world of alternating soul qualities, under the influences of the four ethers and their continuous interweaving. It invites me to live in the richness of a poetic terminology, even within the limits of the problem of translations. The transition from one verse to the next is a question of metamorphosis that can be felt, not pinpointed exactly. Likewise the interpretation of the artistic renditions invites me to a dose of objective observation and immediate understanding, followed by the willingness to let the images mature through the inspiration of the night, or greater lenghts of time.

Through the work with the weekly verses over the course of many years I learn to internalize complementary ways of living. At one point, e.g. at the height of summer, I will have to manifest a part of myself that I don't experience at the opposite time of the year, e.g. close to Christmas time. What presents an obvious challenge at the beginning can become with time second nature. I may find myself as much at home within one mood/prevalent soul quality, as I may in its opposite. From the soul faculty of sensing of the heart / boding (*ahnung*, *ahnen* in the German original) in spring and summer I may naturally glide toward the Michaelic will and the transformation of thinking after Michaelmas time. A first dimension of the experience is then a certain flexibility of soul.

It is this adaptability that can help us move with the seasons. Feeling our soul in tune with the changes in Nature brought about by cosmic factors, by the working of the hierarchies, can then make us realize we are citizens of the cosmos and allow us to live with confidence in our environment, supported by Nature's rhythms. This feeling to which I can relate on the path of Spirit Recollection, acquires here a more universal stamp. I'm referring not to my personal biography but of the way in which I belong to the human race through the Christ impulse, which is so central to the Calendar.

Through the Christ impulse I acquire a new orientation to the world. I am both part of what happens in the world of Nature, and at the same time I make the choice of living in this world in recognition of the Christ spirit that is the spirit of the Earth. This is quite different from living with the natural seasonal inclination alone, from letting oneself be carried by the external manifestation of the season. Here is one side of the convergence of the middle toward the personal end of Spirit Recollection.

At the other side of the spectrum the Calendar speaks of the alternation of my cosmic past—in spring and summer—and my cosmic present and future in fall and winter. What I may know from the exploration and close understanding of *Occult Science* or *Theosophy* offers itself to me in a way closer to the personal through the experience I can glean at each time of

the year. During spring I may feel close both to humanity's past and to the realm of life after death. The expansion into the ethers of this time of the year becomes the opportunity for something larger. At the other time of the year, starting shortly before Michaelmas I can start to feel the importance of a path of initiation, and anticipate steps I will only attain in future, such as the "spirit birth" of verses 44 and 45, or the attainment of cosmic thinking in verse 48.

In this second aspect of the experience of the Calendar I experience what I know of cosmic evolution and of the evolution of consciousness since the time of the Fall, and I let it bear upon my life of feelings. What I'm asked to conceptualize and generalize in my understanding of spiritual scientific evolution of the human being is brought closer to the lived experience of the individual. Here Spirit Beholding is brought closer to the realm of experience, though primarily in feeling.

In bringing together the two aspecs above, the whole of cosmic past and cosmic future, the immersion in the cosmic ethers and their inner transformation in the soul become avenues for a larger understanding of the human being—one that lies midway between the personal of Spirit Recollection and the universal of Spirit Beholding. After all the Christ being that is invoked in the second stanza of the Foundation Stone Meditation is that sublime being who lies both in cosmic rhythms of the solar system and in the rhythm of heart and lung, passing through Nature's yearly rhythms. Microcosm and macrocosm find themeselves expressed, mediated and experienced in truly feeling.

The transformation of the life of feeling is achieved by making room to the larger feelings of the world, to the feelings of the seasons and of the months. Looking at the seasons it is very different to live in the feeling of trust and catharsis that accompanies our willingness to surrender in spring and summer—the time of Nature consciousness close to humanity's original participation—or pouring ourselves out in sacrifice out of the fullness of the gifts of a strengthened Self in the winter—the time of Self-consciousness or conscious participation. On one hand we humble and hollow ourselves out in order to gratefully receive; on the other we joyfully contribute our soul substance in order to co-create with the spiritual world. Living in these larger, cosmic feelings can tone down the feelings that we live in our daily life. To be sure the latter will still be present, but now in the company of larger, more objective feelings that will temper the oscillations and extremes of our inner life.

In essence then, the three paths outlined in the Foundation Stone Meditation are not only means to help us round off our individuality. They mutually reinforce each other as to render it easier for the human being to cross the threshold of the spiritual world in a harmonious fashion.

To further flesh out this tentative exploration I want to move to the results that can be gleaned from the fully lived anthroposophical striving of a famous individual. I will be looking at the life and work of Owen Barfield.

His artistic mood and perspective covers and permeates his soul forces and expresses itself in his lived experience, his feeling life and the distillation of his thoughts. What has been brought forth above can hopefully be confirmed and amplified through a richly documented biography.

Part II

Three Approaches to Pursuing Higher Knowledge in Owen Barfield's Opus

Owen Barfield reached a universal understanding of the question of higher knowledge and how to attain it through the instruments of polarity, language, poetry and imagination, each mutually reinforcing each other. Of course, various other topics overlapped with these.

The young seeker who crossed into the path of anthroposophy had already discovered a number of things about the evolution of language that spiritual science served to confirm, strengthen and, no doubt, render objective and precise. Barfield had already understood, in spite of the cultural and familiar baggage (see section on the biographical meeting with the Double) that hampered his appreciation for things related to feeling and poetry as one of them, that true knowledge going beyond intellectualism has the power to change the individual pursuing it. He differentiated knowledge from intellectualism. The latter keeps us separate from the world, whereas the first can lead us to true participation in the world as it unfolds and develops. True knowledge leads to immediate experience and changes us fundamentally, even if ever so slowly.

In Barfield's dedication to leading the modern human being to higher forms of knowledge we find remarkable parallels between the concepts that he forged, the images he conveyed in his fairy tales and the biographical course that led him to his breakthroughs. These are brought up separately in this essay because in one individual we can see clearly outlined what it means to walk the paths to truly living, feeling and thinking.

It is quite remarkable that the task was "completed" first of all in the artistic realm. By this I mean that what he later elaborated in clear concepts was already present in the imaginations of his two early fairy tales. In this instance we will look at *The Silver Trumpet.* Next we will explore Barfield's biographical books—particularly *This Ever Diverse Pair* and *Unancestral Voice*—in which the author explores his own personal path to the attainment of Imagination. And finally, we will look at some of his milestone achievements in the understanding of the path of knowledge through thinking, the one that probably built the major part of his enduring reputation.

The Silver Trumpet Imagination

It is surprising to notice that much of what Barfield has described over the length of his whole career was anticipated in two tales in the years 1925 and 1929.Tthe two tales illustrate the genuine artistic gift that lived in Barfield's soul, through which a content can emerge from the unconscious and reach a conscious form in an the finished product. Though to my knowledge Barfield has not spoken about the genesis of either story, their

lawfulness and wholeness seems to correspond to what Rudolf Steiner states about certain artistic inspirations that can come very close to true spiritual experience:

> "Now we know that poets, artists in general, sometimes feel a very close relationship between the whole nature of their work, between their experience and vision. In particular, artists who seek their way into the supersensible regions through creative work, fairy-tale writers or other artists who seek to embody the supersensible, rightly tell of a truly living experience, of how they have their figures visibly before them, how they stand before them in action, making an objective, concrete impression when they deal with them. As long as such a confrontation with that which is poured into artistic creation does not take away the composure of the soul, as long as it does not turn into compulsive visions over which human will has no power and composure cannot dispose, one can still speak of a kind of borderline event between artistic vision and seership. In the field of spiritual scientific research alone, a very definite boundary can be seen—and that is the important thing between artistic creation with its source, artistic imagination, on the one hand, and seeing with the eyes closed on the other."[13]

Considering Barfield's artistic gifts, the earnestness of his path of knowledge and the content of both tales it may very well be possible that we have such an instance of "borderline event between artistic vision and seership."

For our sake we will turn to the earlier, more traditional fairy-tale-like story of *The Silver Trumpet*, in which we see the evolution of consciousness going from the author's "original participation" to the "conscious participation" that the modern human being can attain along the modern path of initiation. Without looking at the whole story, nor at all the characters, we will just highlight some steps of this path of transformation. The whole has been reviewed in more detail elsewhere.[14]

In an imaginary "mountainy castle" live a king and queen with their twin daughters, Violet and Gamboy. Left to themselves Violet tends to be beautiful and Gamboy ugly. The two together, however, even out—the one not being quite as beautiful, the other not quite as ugly. Even their character dispositions are extreme opposites. Violet is easily moved to tears, Gamboy hardly ever. Violetta loves hundreds of things, but most of all Gamboy. Gamboy loved only one person, Violet. The way the two loved was also very different. Violet loved because she liked to see people happy. Gamboy was only satisfied when people would do what she told them.

The precarious balance between the sisters is altered when Prince Courtesy comes to the palace in a silver armor, bringing the silver trumpet which will

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[13] Rudolf Steiner, *Understanding Art*, lecture of May 5th, 1918.
[14] Luigi Morelli, J.R.R. *Tolkien, Owen Barfield and the Cosmic Christ*, chapters 5, 6 and 7.

play an important role in what is to follow. In a short time, Violet goes from loving Gamboy first and foremost to loving Prince Courtesy. Violet, who loves to dance and sing, recognizes the special qualities of the silver trumpet, though not fully consciously, while Gamboy cannot.

The trumpet touches all who hear it as a remembrance. It first evokes wonder but this is followed most often by shame. Gamboy feels changed but only in the moment; later she mostly behaves worse. This is partly why she cannot stand its power.

The prince is not initially able to recognize Gamboy from Violet—when his feelings are involved, they render him vulnerable. He mistrusts Gamboy but doesn't really know what she is doing and is vulnerable to her cunning. He falls under her spell mostly through his feelings.

Things take a turn for the worse when Violet accepts to marry Prince Courtesy, setting free Gamboy's unrestrained hatred. Prince Courtesy knows that the trumpet must be kept hidden from those with evil tendencies. He can only control Gamboy through it but is afraid of her and is no match for her malice. He cannot face evil as it grows, though he can feel it. He senses that Gamboy only tells lies, whereas Violet does not. Consequently, Gamboy will neutralize the power of Prince Courtesy by separating him from the silver trumpet.

Having subdued her sister and the prince, Gamboy can implement her broader plans. She stirs up the population against the king, causes Violet to die and subjugates Prince Courtesy and Violet's daughter, Lily. The kingdom spirals down into poverty, discontent and revolt.

Gamboy grows in power through the arts of the "black book." Her love, turned into hatred, pushes her to kill her sister. Now that she owns the silver trumpet she can no longer be reached by shame. The evolution of her deceit causes soul confusion in Lily, keeping in check the emerging powers of the soul and her self-consciousness.

This second part of the story explores the rising of the power of evil and the fact that primeval participation cannot stem the tide. The powers of the future are also kept in check. Thus, Lily lives in fear and ignorance, subjugated through nightmares and sickness. Prince Courtesy retreats into himself, finding refuge from the evil that he cannot fully see, and seeking a surrogate existence in the memory of his love for Violet. He is unable to see the deceit in Gamboy nor does he realize the source of Lily's fear. He can only recover strength in memory.

Lily has inherited some of her mother's qualities and manifests other ones. She can dance beautifully without being taught. However, under Gamboy's thumb she develops apathy, fear and a perennial state of numbing of the soul. Her fear drives her to live in a tower, isolated from people and the world.

In a repeat of the earlier stage a certain Prince Peerio falls in love with the Princess before even seeing any other than her portrait. However, his is not

an unconscious or romantic, idealized love. He has come to understand a good deal about faces during his beggar's journeys around the world. The young prince has a certain depth of perception and does not take things personally. Peerio instinctively knows what to do for "… he was a very wise young Prince (wise in his schooldays and wise when he started out from home)." And quite wisely he doesn't show immediately his feelings for Lily.

Good fortune will smile on Peerio, who in a natural way finds out everything that he needs to know, counting on the help of the spiritual world. He goes forward boldly and without fear. Meanwhile, Lily goes from being ill-disposed toward her entourage to realizing how unhappy she is. She remembers her father telling her fairy tales. Awakening to a new state of mind she is willing to face death and express interest in the future she fears to meet.

The following events become quite intricate, so here is just a little of their essence. The wise Prince Peerio manages to tame Gamboy since he can see through to her evil intentions. The resolution transforms all the characters. Gamboy returns to dreaming of her childhood and starts wondering what she is doing. Prince Courtesy senses that Violet has returned close to him. In fact, Violet has been awakened upon hearing the silver trumpet and she is now acquiring some of the cunning of her sister, that she can put to good use. At the wedding of Lily and Prince Peerio, Gamboy's face is transformed. She is redeemed. The reborn Lily, willing to face death, is happy to marry Prince Peerio. The path has been completed from original wisdom to conscious participation, a knowledge that can free love—a magic at the opposite end of what Gamboy was practicing.

In reviewing Barfield's opus we have a remarkable convergence of parallel paths leading to the overarching theme of the acquisition of higher forms of knowledge. Of course, there is also a lot more aspects that connect to this overall theme.

The Silver Trumpet outlines in the progression from Prince Courtesy to Prince Peerio the soul's journey from original participation to conscious participation. Prince Courtesy can feel things in his guts. In turning to the character of the "little Fat Podger" Prince Peerio knows that he can trust him because "HE FELT IT IN HIS BONES" (capitals in original). Because what Courtesy can detect is preconscious, he renders himself vulnerable to Gamboy's evil schemes. His natural goodness cannot overcome the presence of the deliberate evil that Gamboy derives from the "black book." Humanity has to leave behind its original atavistic consciousness and walk through the desert of the detached, and therefore also dispossessed, spectator consciousness of the present.

Prince Peerio shows how clear thinking can penetrate to the essence of things and not fall victim to the attacks of evil in the realm of feelings or in the will. His redeemed thinking offers the possibility for the forces of the soul present in Violet and Gamboy, and later in Lily, to be reconciled and work together toward higher goals. The prince has fallen in love with

Princess Lily after seeing a painting of her. The text specifies that he "had fallen in love, not with the picture, but with the Princess," which denotes an early maturity in the prince's soul forces, particularly in his thinking.

As was previously stated it is remarkable that such a revelation as *The Silver Trumpet* came so early in Barfield's biography. And we can say that what Prince Courtesy went through in his later stage of disarray shows the way through the cultural desert of the present that Barfield had to traverse before finding the inner resources to transform and reintegrate his soul forces.

The Biographical Barfield at the Crossing of the Threshold

Barfield's will and his thinking proceeded in parallel after the way had been heralded in the realm of feeling. Barfield had to traverse the abyss not only in a power of thinking that he had all the means to transform. His thinking led the way even in his early intuitions. The will lagged further behind, no doubt because of accumulated karmic obstacles. The biographical Barfield needed to reconcile the split between the characters he called *Burgeon* and *Burden* in his biographical novels—the two that confronted his soul in the conflict between the poet and the legal solicitor persona which offered him financial stability. His acceptance of a seemingly untenable dichotomy was rescued by the effort of recollection of *This Ever Diverse Pair*. What follows in *Unancestral Voice* was possible because the brunt of the confrontation had taken place earlier between Burgeon and Burden. Barfield/Burgeon had withstood the meeting with the Guardian of the Threshold

What was revealed to Barfield through his early artistic inspiration was played out in his life through an inner confrontation that brought him to the edge of mental breakdown. Two books lead us through the changes that allowed him to face his inner abyss and cross the threshold.

This Ever Diverse Pair was first published in 1950 when Barfield was practicing as a solicitor, a legal professional, but had already been written in the late 40s.The book was written when Barfield experienced both an intense struggle within his profession and a very difficult period in his marriage.[15] The "diverse pair" of Barfield's personality is framed by Burgeon and Burden, a literary giveaway, as it were of the extremes of Barfield's personality. Burgeon as a verb means to put forth as buds; as noun, a bud, or a sprout. Burden, is "that which is borne with difficulty, an obligation or onus"; as a verb means "to load oppressively, to trouble." The names are very well chosen; the first as that which is of promise to the future (something like the emerging Self); the second as that which we all carry as a hindrance (something like the Double).

To Shirley Sugerman, Barfield described the pair as a "kind of polarity as tension, very much as tension. And the tension at one stage became so violent that, together with other pressures, it very nearly resulted in a nervous breakdown; and I think I've always thought, looking back, that I avoided a

[15] *Owen Barfield: Romanticism Comes of Age*, Simon Blaxland-de Lange, 267.

nervous breakdown, largely by writing that little book *This Ever Diverse Pair* and really in a way I did it out of that impulse, out of desperation, rather than having any hope of ever publishing it as a book. The characters Burden and Burgeon are embodiments or symbols, or whatever, of a very real experience of polarity and tension in my own life."[16]

Briefly retracing some of the steps in the book's progress of soul we will just mention some key encounters. Conveying to Sugerman the prelude to his inner confrontation in *This Ever Diverse Pair*, Barfield offers us the nature of the contrast he experienced in entering the legal profession: "It does come out, I think, very strongly in the fact that I went into the law, law being almost by definition the very opposite of the poetic. It's abstract, and so forth, and the poetic is living and organic, or however you like to put it. And my being instinctively in the one, and being compelled to live with my mind and activity very much in the other did lead, over a great part of my life, I suppose, to a kind of polarity as tension, very much as tension."[17]

On the way to the culmination of the crisis, Barfield has to confront various aspects of his Double: first the "family Double," then his "professional Double." In his family upbringing Barfield uncritically accepted the notion that emotional experience, enthusiasm and anything else he could undergo in the realm of feelings could not be trusted. Naturally, this included what belonged to poetic expression.

In his unfolding soul development Barfield recognizes a similarity between Burden and his father. He recognizes it in gestures, attitudes, and notices that "The instant after, I see the effect from the outside, and it is in these instants that I do occasionally feel something approaching to affection for that animated rag-bag of doubts and worries, my partner Burden."[18] Here Barfield approaches the layer of the Double closest to inheritance.

We will see the next confrontation with the professional Double that Barfield tackles with humor. Burgeon apprehends the three archetypal characters of Lynx, Glossy, and Applejohn as negative, stereotypical expressions of the lawyer/solicitor, the Doubles of the profession, each tied to a particular temperament or combination thereof. These doubles the various responses that individuals offer to habit and loss of passion, and even basic interest for their profession. Burden threatens to turn into the perfect "Applejohn," whom Barfield characterizes as "the one craftsman of our profession [who] likes documents as such"[19], not for how they can support their clients.

After the larger confrontation comes to a head, Burgeon reflects, "I had won one of the hardest battles of my life, and for a long time I lay quietly and peacefully in bed." And he adds: "For it is the Burdens of this world who keep traditions alive, it is the Burgeons who create them. The Burdens cannot make

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[16] *Evolution of Consciousness: Studies in Polarity,* Shirley Sugerman editor, xviii.
[17] *Evolution of Consciousness*, Shirley Sugerman, ed., 21.
[18] Owen Barfield, This Ever Diverse Pair, 60.
[19] Owen Barfield, *This Ever Diverse Pair*, 96.

anything; they can only collect and preserve."[20] And Barfield touches on the more personal dimension of his hindrances when he recognizes that his thinking needs more grounding.

Something more appears on second reading. It is by meeting the Double face to face that we can dissipate its strength and hold on to the core of the personality. It is remarkable how Barfield has touched at diverse aspects of the personal hindrances, and understandable therefore how the book played the therapeutic role that Barfield attributed to it, if nothing else because of Barfield's ability to look at Burgeon and Burden with detachment and humor. The whole effort bears the hallmark of an effort of Spirit Recollection, being an artistic but also exact account of soul observations conducted over time. It is through this protracted effort that Barfield could live through what originated in his soul, which appeared externally unbearable. In his appraisal Barfield clearly takes complete responsibility for the events that befall him.

Without going into a minor contribution offered in *Worlds Apart* we will move to how Barfield describes the reaching of higher knowledge—Imagination rendered understandable through some degree of Inspiration—in *Unancestral Voice*. In the first chapter of the book we meet once again Burgeon, this time in company of his two friends Rodney and Middleton. Together they have an earnest conversation around D. H. Lawrence's publication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in the wake of the outrage that the book's publication has raised within the press when Lawrence is brought to trial.

A pivotal moment occurs the following morning. Its origins can be traced back to Burgeon's careful recollection of the previous night's talk when he wakes up. He begins to identify patterns in the dialogue. Later, while he is shaving, no less, the turning point occurs:

> "He did not hear any voice. And yet a train of thought began presenting itself to him in the same mode in which thoughts present themselves when we hear them from the lips of another. They included thoughts that he himself was not aware of having ever previously entertained. For the most part the thoughts that were 'given' in this way were naked of words. He himself had to find the words before he forgot the thoughts—and in order that he may not forget them."[21]

After the fact Burgeon notices that he has never felt "more fully conscious and clear-headed." Burgeon's creativity helps him comprehend the viewpoints of the people involved in Lawrence's trial. He gains a more elevated viewpoint that is largely judgment-free. He may now link the different viewpoints to a change in human nature in present time at least in the West. This is a change in human constitution "gradually developing and informing some sort of delicate structure or complex of forces in the front part of the brain and at the same time in the organs of reproduction."[22] After this first visit from a higher

[20] Owen Barfield, *This Ever Diverse Pair*, 93.
[21] Owen Barfield, *Unancestral Voice*, 11.
[22] Owen Barfield, *Unancestral Voice*, 13.

realm of thought, Burgeon is left with the results but not the presence. The experience leaves him when he must re-immerse himself in the duties of the day-to-day. It does not come back for a time.

The first isolated instance raises some doubts in Burgeon's healthily skeptic mind. He takes time to verify the soundness of his source of inspiration before accepting it. The confrontation between Burden and Burgeon takes place anew, though this time on a minor scale. Burden downplays Burgeon's experience as "simply the old Neo-platonism turning up again." Burden doubts of the reality of the experience Burgeon has had. On his side Burgeon doubts there could ever be anything more real than this new consciousness. And overtime he is satisfied that it passes the test of reason.

Sometime later Burgeon returns to his understanding of the debates around *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, calling to mind the conversation with Rodney and Middleton. He associates his thoughts with the content of the book itself and some of its passages, particularly the contrasts between the pleasures of the mind and the role of sensuality. All along, however, Burgeon resists the temptation of spiritual pride that claims his thoughts as superior to those of his intellectual opponents.

At a later point, after new reflections, Burgeon feels the approach of the state of inspiration speaking in him, asking him to go back in his reasoning before proceeding further. Burgeon realizes that the potency of man's drives has descended from the head to the lower organism in modern time. He sees this in relation to man's historical development. He now understands the intermediate stage of medieval literature as a descent into the heart. At present, what he calls potency has fully descended into the lower organism. This indicates to Burgeon that Lawrence was right in what he was perceiving, though not right in the conclusions he drew from it. This potency is for modern man—as Lawrence had somehow perceived—a surviving link with the cosmos. In line with the above, for Lawrence, the Logos "meant the insipidity of intellect, because intellect had no potency."

At last Burgeon understands clearly where his position differs from that of Lawrence. The potency has become the domain of the human being, and his only, so that he can now give it back to the Logos. And it could take two opposite directions—down into the lower organism or creatively liberated in the mind. He sees both how Lawrence and his supporters are in a sense completely right in having a certain understanding of the mood of modern time, but at a deeper level are completely wrong. He sees that only a higher knowledge can quell the longing of the modern human being: "the desperate cry, going up from a world more out of joint than ever before in its long history, for creative mind and for the treasury of knowledge which that alone can unlock from the strong-room wither it has been withdrawn, to set us free."

Inspiration speaks in Barfield, not through him. It is like speaking, though it is revelation at the same time. Barfield consciously understands the thoughts, though they lead him beyond the realm of immediate experience. Finally, Barfield will lead us from the realm of personal experience into the universal

dimension of it. The voice that speaks to him indicates to him that his brain, like any other brain, usually reflects as a mirror. And the mirror is a boundary beyond which lay concealed forces of destruction, but also a place that is a center of rebirth and creation:

> "You are one of those who have at least peeped behind the mirror. And what you have found there so far is thought [not beings]. But these thoughts are other than your memory-thoughts, of which they are nonetheless the source and origin. For these are the creative thoughts themselves . . . they are nothing remembered, because they are one with the life itself that supports and enables the act of memory. Therefore it is that, when you experience them at all, you cannot experience them—as you do the memory-thoughts—as being 'your own' because spun from your brain. They own an objectivity which in terms of everyday life you can better compare with perceiving than with thinking. And yet they are indeed your own in the deepest sense of all, because, unlike the memory-thoughts, they are also your substance and your life; so that to perceive them is verily to perceive the spirit within you in the act of creating."[23]

In summing up, the great value of *Unancestral Voice* as a book lies in showing us one individual experience as an example of a possible universal experience: the transformation of dead thinking of a mirror-like quality into a living thinking in which thought becomes in effect a perception of the living idea. And all of this is reported in the most precise of possible ways at the end when Barfield indicates that perceiving the ideas means to participate as well in the act of the creation of the spirit.

Burgeon has completely crossed the threshold and nullified the residual objections of Burden. He is walking the first steps of imaginative consciousness, even colored with Inspiration. Burgeon/Barfield has no longer reason to doubt the validity of the inspirations that speak through him.

In his biographical books Barfield has followed the soul's journey of initiation in quite a precise way. In the anthroposophical path of self-development the crossing of the threshold follows the meeting with the Guardian. And so it is in Barfield's case. The Double is tested repeatedly while Barfield struggles with the "karma of vocation" and the tug of war between his poetic/literary aspirations and the drab prospects offered by his bread and butter as a solicitor, not to mention specific karmic challenges within his own marriage. When the bulk of the confrontation is overcome little is left to be transformed, and this is mostly connected with the discipline of clear thinking in order to vouchsafe the messages received in inspiration. The ordeal as it is reported is completed by around 1963.

[23] Owen Barfield, *Unancestral Voice*, 220.

Barfield followed in the course of his biography the transformation brought about by a conscious path of initiation, a path of transformation of ordinary thinking into the tool of Imagination and Inspiration.

Barfield, Poetry, Polarity and Imagination

Barfield attained to a universal understanding of the question of higher knowledge and how to attain in his more theoretical books, the ones for which he may be most well-known.

We can follow Barfield's thinking through the meanders of the pursuit of knowledge and the search for "objective idealism"; of poetry as a purveyor of meaning particularly through the agency of the metaphor; of the discovery of polarity particularly in following Coleridge's poetry and the evolution of his thinking; finally, of how all the above are reflected in the evolution and history of language as it mirrors the evolution of consciousness from its mythological beginnings to the modern prosaic and rational use of it.

In the pursuit of knowledge Barfield steered a course midway between what he called "Platonic idealism" on one end and "fusion" on the other, both as variations of subjective idealism. In Platonic idealism ideas are conceived as having an independent, separate existence of their own. A variation of this idealism "treats ideas as subjective processes in individual human minds but nevertheless … presents them as being more real than the objective world"[24] Barfield recognized this second option in the work of C. S. Lewis, with the tendency toward fusion, particularly in Lewis' phase that preceded the conversion to Christianity. In Barfield's words Lewis claimed "… the only self is the self of the whole universe. And that is how he resolved the contradiction between freewill and predestination."[25] The epithet of "fusion" is given for obvious reasons. Over and against the two tendencies Barfield upholds the possibility of "objective idealism."

> "Objective idealism contains... that reality, individual being, however you think of it, consists in the polarity between the subjectivity of the individual mind and the objective world which it perceives.... What you call the objective world is merely one pole of what is a unitary process and what we call subjective experience is the other pole, but they're not really divided from each other."[26]

The above thinking clearly converges toward Steiner's *The Philosophy of Freedom*, pointing to the redemption of thinking and its elevation to a power able to connect and reconcile subjective perception with its

[24] Owen Barfield, *Evolution of Consciousness: Studies in Polarity,* Shirley Sugerman editor, 18.
[25] Owen Barfield, *Evolution of Consciousness: Studies in Polarity,* Shirley Sugerman editor, 22.
[26] Owen Barfield, *Evolution of Consciousness: Studies in Polarity,* Shirley Sugerman editor, 18.

conceptual counterpart. Thinking can thus become an objective tool for knowledge and the limits to this knowledge only hinge on our personal capacities and the point in which we are in our personal development at any given moment. Ultimately, however, there are no limits to knowledge and only thinking can lead the way to a truly conscious participation in the world process when it is imbued with the will, and thus focused, transformed and spiritualized.

In Barfield this formulation of thought took its departure from his experience of poetry that he strove to describe in objective terms. At age twenty Barfield explored the power of poetry and intuited that it generated more than subjective feelings, that there was more to it. From these intuitions arose his *Poetic Diction*, which he qualified as "a theory of poetry as a form of knowledge." He saw that the poet could exert a creative power because "the way in which a particular word comes up in a particular passage, in a particular context, produces a kind of magic which alters the meaning of the word, gives the word an entirely new meaning."[27]

Barfield had put his finger on the revelatory quality of poetry, its capacity for being a form of knowledge. After reading a great poem, e.g. one speaking about woods or mountains, the reader who has taken the poem in can return to this environment and experience it in a new and fuller way. He can delve into something new, added to his previous experience. In the introduction to *Romanticism Comes of Age* he expressed it thus: "… I had two things strongly impressed on me, firstly that the poetic or imaginative use of words enhances their meanings and secondly that those enhanced meanings may reveal hitherto unapprehended parts or aspects of reality."[28]

As Steiner had gone back to Goethe, so Barfield found the equivalent of the German genius for the English language in Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Though not quite as fully as Goethe, Coleridge's work had aimed at overcoming the dualistic outlook of his time with the notion and experience of polarity. Barfield asserted that Coleridge had "Anglicized the German philosophical inspiration at the time of the romantic movement. Nobody else understood that or tried to at all."[29] Coleridge had intellectually refuted the positivism of the nineteenth century. And Barfield embraced and carried further the work of the English poet and philosopher.

Following his predecessor, Barfield saw that polarity expressed the interplay of two forces emanating from a single power. Examples of it would be gravity and levity, light and darkness, expansion and contraction, cold and warmth, etc. When moving to one end of the spectrum we can minimize the other force, though never eliminate it. The two are inexorably tied to each other. Hence the insight that they are expressions of a higher force outside of the realm of time, a unity in the realm of eternity. We could say

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[27] Owen Barfield, *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*, 6.
[28] Owen Barfield, *Romanticism Comes of Age*, 7.
[29] Owen Barfield, Shirley Sugerman editor, *Evolution of Consciousness: Studies in Polarity,* 4.

that the oneness outside of time manifests as separation and opposition in the realm of the senses. And the greater this opposition the greater is its archetypal unity.

The human being embodies this seeming conundrum in his very being. We are all separated from each other by our individuality. However, the more we become individualized the more can we have a feeling for the universality of the human condition. The more am I individualized the more can I relate to all possible expressions of individuality.

Like Rudolf Steiner, Barfield saw that the human being can so transform his knowledge as to attain "conscious participation." This is a term he coined to contrast what is possible for modern consciousness with the original consciousness of the human being before the Fall, which he called "original participation." In this earlier kind of participation the human being was completely at home in the surrounding spiritual environment but was not aware of herself as a separate entity.

The path to conscious participation passes in poetry through the awakening of Imagination. In following Coleridge's thinking this would be "secondary imagination" added to the normally occurring "primary imagination" through which human beings make sense of their world. We cannot apprehend/make sense of our world through sense perception alone. Perception is by necessity accompanied by the rising of mental images, which correspond to primary imagination. With new sense perceptions mental images become fuller and each mental image is linked to a multitude of other mental images. To be able to replicate what the true poet does—penetrating to some degree beyond the veil of sense perception—what is needed is secondary imagination, which can be cultivated. In the case of poetry, says Coleridge, primary imaginations makes things—they render them comprehensible—secondary imagination produces meaning.[30]

When secondary imagination turns to the act of perception, Nature is grasped in fuller participation, rather than simple detached observation. And the prime vehicle for such participation is what Barfield calls "true metaphor." Such a metaphor articulates through a flash of intuition a deeper reality at work in Nature and offers the reader a deeper communion with his environment. It comes a step closer to the forces active in Nature but concealed from immediate perception. When the poet reaches a true metaphor, according to Coleridge, his imagination is elevated beyond the pale copy of fancy. It is both artistic and exact. Fancy may acquire an artistic appearance but is not accurate.

In the estimate of the above, Barfield turns to Coleridge's quote that "poetry is the best word in the best order." For Barfield this produces in the reader a "felt change of consciousness", where "consciousness" embraces all my awareness of my surroundings at any given moment, and

[30] Owen Barfield, *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*, 22.

"surroundings" include my own feelings."[31] The moment of felt change—the expansion of consciousness derived from the apprehension of the metaphors—produces artistic pleasure. Pleasure and change are thus intimately connected. We could say that the reader himself is invited to take the journey from primary imagination to secondary imagination. The one who appreciates poetry can apprehend what he could not hitherto see in his environment or in his soul.

The above realizations spurred Barfield the poet to study philology, the origin of words and their evolution. Barfield the poet joined hands with Barfield the scientist. Art and science became the guiding polarity in his being for a deepening of true knowledge as opposed to intellectualism. Also armed with his understanding of spiritual science Barfield could fully articulate what he had intuited in his youth. He could give us a history of consciousness in human language, a history of language from a poet's perspective.

The first expression of language is that belonging to mythological consciousness, which predates writing. The primary meanings of words were given. They could be felt and experienced but not consciously known, nor fully apprehended. The gods created and the human being, who received, could not yet himself create. The rhythmical nature of the whole of life and the whole natural environment penetrated the life of the human being and was expressed in literature and poetry, which were themselves rhythmical. The result appeared in the metric form which prevailed "… when men were conscious not merely of their heads, but in the beating of their hearts and the pulsing of their blood—when thinking was not merely of Nature but was Nature herself."[32]

After a lapse of time we find ourselves at an intermediate stage, such as was expressed in the Vedas or in the works of Homer. Here are the first written records in which we still find "meaning still suffused with myth, and Nature all alive in the thinking of man."[33] At this stage the poet is something of a mouthpiece, someone through whom speaks a god or a spiritual being, but only at certain times of His choosing.

Ancient Greece forms a transition point toward modern consciousness, especially in the 6th and 5th centuries before Golgotha. When Plato passes on the baton to Aristotle we witness the rise of a more abstract thinking, though one still imbued with inner life. From that time on the poet becomes more of an individual and less of an instrument of the divine.

Moving into modern times language gradually starts losing its inner life. The rational element gains more influence over the mythical/imaginative. The grammatical structure of language hardens and even poetical language loses its previous flexibility. The poet is almost fighting against a hostile element in language. At the point of transition between the ancient poetical

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[31] Owen Barfield, *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*, 40.
[32] Owen Barfield, *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*, 144.
[33] Owen Barfield, *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*, 87.

power and the modern rational element Barfield sees the appearance of the great poets of the emerging national cultures, such as Shakespeare in Britain, Dante Alighieri in Italy, Miguel de Cervantes in Spain, etc. Another sign of this transition is seen in the English language in the use of prose as an imaginative medium rather than poetry.

In summarizing this progression, and adding the key concepts of Imagination and Inspiration, Barfield concludes in *Poetic Diction*: "The progress is from Meaning [here meaning is given and of transcendental origin], through inspiration to imagination, and from imagination, through metaphor, to meaning; inspiration grasping the hitherto unapprehended, and imagination relating it to the already known."[34]

From the above another polarity has been announced, whose integration is the fulcrum and paradigm upon which poetry will keep evolving—the rational element on one hand and the properly poetic on the other. Through the rational pole the original, all-encompassing meanings of words splinter into various, separate concepts. The original Greek "pneuma" standing for wind, spirit, cosmic force, unifying principle and more can no longer be apprehended in modern consciousness, other than in its separate components, listed above, plus other ones.

Whereas the rational principle, ascending in modern time, defines, circumscribes and differentiates, the poetic tries to recreate a living unity. It calls our attention to the similarity between things. It is interested in penetrating to the essence of what things are, whereas the rational mostly tells us what they are not. The individualized poet of modern time can thus intuit relationships that others, and even culture itself, no longer perceive. These truths he brings forth in metaphors. "In Platonic terms we should say that the rational principle can increase *understanding*, and it can increase *true opinion*, but it can never increase *knowledge*."[35] The latter is the domain of the poetic. However, the two principles are in themselves polarities that need to be integrated, even more so in the individuality of the poet.

In line with what Steiner says about art in general, for example in his lecture cycle *Understanding Art*, the poet can grow in self-knowledge and start creating in full self-consciousness. The artist tries to incorporate the laws of the world into the material but generally does so unconsciously. The seer tries to apprehend the spiritual consciously. The modern poet can lessen the gap between the two.

> "And what works and weaves as an independent spiritual reality, unconsciously by the artist, consciously by the seer, is what is common to the seer's perception of the world and the artist's creation, except that it is also expressed spiritually by the seer, and by the artist, because he cannot express it, but only has it

[34] Owen Barfield, *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*, 148.
[35] Owen Barfield, *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*, 141.

> unconsciously in his hands, in his imagination, to which 'material can be incorporated.'"[36]

The poet can write when he is immersed in the poetic mood but can only fully evaluate the result of it when he steps back into the rational mood. Over time he can bridge the gap, or reduce the distance, between one and the other mood. As Barfield reminds us, a great modern poet should also be a great intellect.

Shakespeare paved the way in the sense of what is said above. The bard coined more words than any other writer in the English language. This means that he uncovered new meaning. He fathered words such as *pedant*, *critic*, *majestic*. He also used other words outside of the then agreed-upon supernatural or religious context. Such were *create*, *religion*, *magic* or *anguish*, *bounty*, *mercy*, *comfort*, *compassion*, *devotion* and many others. What Shakespeare inaugurated and the modern poet continues is such that "Poetry in our time implies expression, and therefore judgment. For us the perfect poet is also the perfect critic."[37]

This overall descent from the spirit and effort to reascend toward it spells the largest cosmological tableau that Barfield paints in broad brushstrokes. If unity in the spirit precedes diversity in the world of physical manifestation, then we can follow the processes of materialization and spiritualization that are central to world evolution. A first part of the process of evolution consists in the descent from a primeval consciousness of participation in the spirit—that Barfield qualified as "original consciousness"—to the world of matter. This first step is one of estrangement from our source in the spirit. The development of consciousness affects the human being to the point of eventually being able to awaken in his will the desire to transform his thinking. In the long term the human being will influence matter. This would mean that through a newly awakened participatory consciousness he would be able to take a reverse path to the descent by helping to spiritualize matter through his newly awakened participatory consciousness.

Conclusions

In concluding we have in Barfield one who is recognized both as a brilliant thinker and an accomplished artist. In the "Mystery Drama" of his life he crosses the threshold by carrying thinking, feeling and willing in a very balanced way, showing us an example of what it means to differentiate and re-integrate the soul forces in the way we are invited to do through the Foundation Stone Meditation.

Barfield's pursuit of balance between the three soul forces can be further exemplified in two other directions. In *Worlds Apart: A Dialogue of the*

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[36] Rudolf Steiner, *Understanding Art*, lecture of June 1st, 1918.
[37] Owen Barfield, *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*, 168.

1960's Barfield mixes the biographical with the theme of the pursuit of knowledge. In a modern Platonic dialogue he assembles a cast of eight characters, each of which represents a specific field of knowledge. Among these are a biologist, a theologian, a physicist, a psychiatrist, a teacher, a philosopher, a rocket scientist, and … Burgeon, a lawyer. The book explores how modern science creates a split between science, art and the humanities, alienates the modern human being and sets us adrift of life's underlying wholeness.

In the realm of truly feeling this higher unity is expressed in Barfield's love for the Calendar of the Soul. Alone, among the large group of English translators he offered us a paraphrase rather than a literal translation. But this does not mean taking liberties with the content of the Calendar. His grasp of the living quality and meta-historical perspective of the course of the year penetrates to the very essence of the "year participated." In the interweaving of spring and summer on one hand, fall and winter on the other, he recognizes that the first one offers us a reminder/experience of original participation, the second one of conscious participation.

> "During any week of the year we are facing both ways towards DREAM and towards SELF. It is the interplay between these two faces that creates the *Tertium Quid*, the essential "third thing", which harmonizes the Soul within Us and the Spirit within the Cosmos. …Human consciousness flows by degrees from *un-self-conscious* participation [DREAM] through exclusive *self-consciousness* [SELF], towards a wider Self-consciousness, one no longer incompatible with direct participation in the Whole. Nature provides her equivalent in the "heights" of Summer (DREAM) and the "depths" of Winter (SELF)."[38]

In yet other ways Barfield interwove the biographical spiritual striving into the artistic format in an attempt to emulate on a minor scale the Mystery Dramas, though he was certainly conscious of the immensity of such an attempt, and the tentative nature of his own effort. In this direction he tried his hand in the writing of an "ecological novella", titled *Eager Spring*. It presents the modern story of a couple, Leonard and Vi (Virginia). Leonard is the typical modern scientist, confined to his field of inquiry. Vi is interested in English literature, especially from the Middle Ages but in such a way that she tries to see how people thought and felt in earlier times.

Virginia becomes deeply concerned about the fate of the earth and about her soul and spirit. Her involvement with anthroposophy precipitates a deep crisis. Vi of present life is later presented as Maria of the age of the troubadours ("*trovatori*") during which she knew a certain Paolo, a *trovatore* who had striven all his life to perceive the hidden dimensions of reality and the beings that stand behind the sense perceptible. The story subtly repeats the themes of modern life but offers them from the perspective of Paolo and the awakening Maria. The tragic epilogue serves

[38] Owen Barfield, *The Year Participated*.

as the foundation of the awakening of Leonard, who "did not know that he had indeed started for the first time to think.[39]

In this novella we have portrayed in art that additional element that goes beyond the individual, personal dimension of the path to truly living, most aptly presented to us in *This Ever Diverse Pair*. We also see portrayed the dimension of collegiality and interdependence of the web of destiny and the threads of karma that offer a larger vista of the interconnection of human lives and how they mutually influence each other in the pursuit of self-development and higher knowledge. We realize how it is possible to pierce through the veil of present events and reveal how karma formed in previous incarnations overshadows what we pursue in a present incarnation, who we meet and how the spiritual battles of yore are metamorphosed and transformed into the present.

In closing this review we can celebrate the overarching unity manifested in the diversity of Owen Barfield's literary opus. Underlining his constantly present artistic undertone is a pursuit of knowledge that was lived in the life of thinking through treatises that popularized and individualized the anthroposophical path of initiation. It was followed with equal diligence in the purely imaginative content of his two early tales and related to experience through his autobiographical books or his novella. Other themes variously brought together combinations of one and the other pursuits. Barfield's path was so individualized that his numerous followers could either be content with what the writer could offer or naturally continue from Barfield into Rudolf Steiner's spiritual science.

In trying to round-off this essay I'm moved by the consideration that this exploration should be part of a much larger conversation, which I alone only have the bare rudiments to pursue. Since it concerns the wholeness of the human being, and we most often are by definition one-sided, I become keenly aware of my own limitations. I would imagine it fruitful to continue this undertaking collegially, thus complementing each other's perceptions and presenting a fuller picture.

[39] Owen Barfield, *Eager Spring*, 143.