

INTRODUCTION B

1 B: The Romantic context: themes from Goethe and Schiller viewed as formative by Steiner in early years, and viewed as supportive to his 'anthroposophy' in later years

1B1: Egyptian Mysteries: Schiller's esoteric religiosity and pre-existence

As we noted earlier, Steiner mentions in his autobiography that Schiller's *Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (*Letters about the aesthetic education of humanity*) were of considerable significance for him as a young man. In his anthroposophical period, Steiner commented of Schiller in lectures to Theosophists that, "His entire way of living, his entire personal striving, was one great self education, and in this sense, he was a practicing Theosophist."⁷³ Naturally, the term Theosophist here has that broader connotation to Steiner, which we have noted above. In a series of lectures on Schiller, given in 1905, Steiner presents elements of Schiller's spiritual worldview which he found to be affirmative of his own. Such references to Schiller and Goethe by Steiner are consistent with his method of referring to affirmative material from Central European literary figures, in contrast to using material from Indian sources, which were preferred by the leaders of the Adyar-based Theosophical Society.

Commenting on a passage in Schiller's *Julian Correspondence*, Steiner describes that Schiller had developed the view that everything in the world derives from a spiritual primal fundament, and the human being too, has arisen out of this primal fundament.⁷⁴ The passage of Schiller's, from which Steiner quotes is,

⁷³Rudolf Steiner, *Ursprung und Ziel des Menschen*, (Dornach: RSV, 1981), 403; „Seine ganze Lebensführung, sein ganzes Streben ist nichts anderes als eine große Selbsterziehung, und in diesem Sinne ist Schiller ein praktischer Theosoph“.

⁷⁴Rudolf Steiner, *Über Philosophie, Geschichte und Literatur*, (Dornach: RSV 1983), 243.

The universe is a thought of God. Once this ideal⁷⁵ spiritual image passed over into manifested reality, and the born world has – permit me this human notion – fulfilled its Creator’s design, it is the duty of all thinking beings to find again the initial design in this now extant whole; to seek out the principle in the machine, the unity in the compound, the law in the phenomenon, and to transfer retrospectively the edifice back to its [ideal] ground-plan.⁷⁶

The editors of Schiller’s Works, in their commentary, point out that quite a number of Schiller’s attitudes here can be found in other Romantic writers. The editors characterize Schiller’s ideas in his *Philosophical Letters* as ‘theosophical’ in the wider sense, and hence in the sphere of ‘the esoteric’.⁷⁷ Certainly, Schiller expresses here convictions which are closely allied to those which we have considered so far in Steiner’s anthroposophy. The capacity in humanity to apprehend the archetypal thoughts, and the conclusion that creation derives from the archetypal Idea is as we have noted, a major element in Steiner’s philosophical writings on cognition.

These are elaborated in great detail in his esoteric works, being integral to Steiner’s anthroposophical worldview. In his lectures and writings on cosmology, Steiner elaborates a cosmic system in which, in the first instance, Deity – through the efficacy of the nine ranks of hierarchical beings, known to us from medieval theologians – forms the visible created world. These beings use the Idea to bring about an embodiment of the Idea in the material world. This Idea is condensed into material reality over long periods of time.

Then, moreover, as humanity awakens to its potential in lifetimes upon the Earth, the task devolves upon people to learn to perceive

⁷⁵‘Ideal’ here is an adjective meaning of, or from, an archetypal Idea, in the Platonic sense.

⁷⁶Schiller, *SW*, Bd 21, 115, „Das Universum ist ein Gedanke Gottes. Nachdem dieses idealische Geistesbild in die Wirklichkeit hinübertrat und die geborne Welt den Riß ihres Schöpfers erfüllte – erlaube mir diese menschliche Vorstellung – so ist der Beruf aller denkenden Wesen, in diesem vorhandenen Ganzen die erste Zeichnung wiederzufinden, die Regel in der Maschine, die Einheit in dem Zusammenhang, das Gesetz in dem Phänomen aufzusuchen und das Gebäude rückwärts auf seinen Grundriß zu übertragen.“

⁷⁷Schiller, *SW*, Bd. 21, 161.

these cosmic archetypal thoughts, and thereby cognize their inherent dynamics, by a sensitive insightful response to the phenomena of the spiritual world. As Steiner explained to his audiences, the acolyte must learn to read 'the hidden script'. The acolyte is not only to attain to images of a psychic nature, but to allow the relationship of these various images to exert an efficacy upon oneself,

One begins to arrange the lines of force, which move creatively throughout the world, into certain figures and colour formations. One learns to sense an inner connection which is expressed in these figures; this exerts the efficacy of the spiritual tone, of the music of the spheres, for these figures are formed according to the true cosmic relationships.⁷⁸

The implication here is that the esotericist in Steiner's understanding has developed the consciousness state in which the formative lines of force can be perceived. Once perceived, the next step is to sense the connection these have to the archetypal Ideas from the Creator. Schiller's reference to 'seeking out the principle in the machine' does not pose a contradiction for Steiner, rather, it affirms his viewpoint.

To Steiner, the capacity of the human being to conceive ideas is an extension, within the microcosm of humanity, of the creative power of the deity in the macrocosm. When a person creates a concept, whether of a machine or of a virtue or a literary work, there is to be an archetypal idea of these in the 'Devachan', or the Platonic realm of Ideas, "a new thought, a work of art, a new machine, brings something into the world (from Devachan) which was not there before. ... For the most insignificant original deeds there are already models in Devachan."⁷⁹ Such humanly generated ideas are not considered to be as potent as those of deity, but nevertheless, have an archetypal existence.

⁷⁸Rudolf Steiner, *Die Theosophie des Rosenkreuzer*, (Dornach: RSV, 1979), 162.

⁷⁹Rudolf Steiner, *Rosenkreuzers*, 42, „Ein neuer Gedanke, ein Kunstwerk, eine neue Maschine bringt etwas in die Welt, was noch nicht da war ... Auch für die unbedeutendsten originellen Handlungen sind schon Vorbilder im Devachan vorhanden.“

In the same lecture on Schiller, Steiner quotes directly from a passage in Schiller's theosophical-mystical *Julian Correspondence*, in which two friends discuss esoteric themes. The sentence which Steiner quotes is, " ... alles in mir und außer mir ist nur eine Hieroglyph des höchsten Wesens" (everything in me and outside me is only a hieroglyph of the highest being)', commenting that this is an expression of the theosophy of Schiller.⁸⁰ Steiner then paraphrases these and the above words of Schiller, in this way, "All things in the world derive from a primal spiritual source of all creation. The human being, too, initially has its origin from this primal source of all creation; it is a confluence of all of the forces of the greater world."⁸¹

The term, 'a hieroglyph of the highest being' is a prominent metaphor in Steiner's works. In 1920 Steiner gave a course of lectures entitled, "Correspondences between the microcosm and the macrocosm; man as a hieroglyph of the universe." In this lecture cycle he laboured to demonstrate how deeply inherent in the kingdoms of nature is the efficacy of the cosmos, as his introductory words indicate,

In reality the constitution of the universe can not really be considered unless one continuously makes reference to the human being, unless one always tries to discover in the universe, so to speak, that which is also in one way or another in the human being.⁸²

Steiner concludes in his lecture on Schiller from 1905, that to Schiller, the harmony of the world did not appear as something already attained, but as a goal of development. That is, the eternal

⁸⁰Rudolf Steiner, *Über Philosophie*, 243.

⁸¹Rudolf Steiner, *Über Philosophie, Geschichte und Literatur*, (Dornach: RSV, 1983), 242-3, „Alles in der Welt entstammt einem geistigen Urgrunde. Auch der Mensch ist zunächst hervorgegangen aus diesem Urgrund; er ist ein Zusammenfluß aller Kräfte der Welt.“

⁸²Rudolf Steiner, *Entsprechungen zwischen Mikrokosmos und Makrokosmos, Der Mensch – eine Hieroglyphe des Weltenall*, (Dornach: RSV, 1987), 53, „In Wirklichkeit kann die Konstitution des Weltenalls gar nicht betrachtet werden, ohne daß man fortwährend auf den Menschen Bezug nimmt, gewissermaßen immer versucht, dasjenige im Weltenall draußen aufzusuchen, was sich auch in irgendeiner Weise im Menschen findet.“

harmony of nature appeared as something beautiful to him, but also as something which the human being also should strive to attain. This conclusion by Steiner allows Schiller's texts to harmonize very closely with his view of higher spiritual attainment; such an achievement involves a successful striving by the acolyte to attain to an inner harmony. Steiner concluded that this harmony has a perfect expression in the natural world, especially in the movement of the planets in the solar system.⁸³

Additionally, the concept of pre-existence, encountered in the Romantics, has a significant role in Steiner's spiritual-esoteric worldview, because, as mentioned earlier, it logically opens the possibility of the concept of more than one life. Repeated earth-lives is a pivotal concept in Steiner's understanding of human existence; he sees a specific purpose to human life, a purpose which can only be fulfilled through more than one life. In effect, Steiner considered that the human being returns to Earth many times, in order to attain ever-higher spirituality and wisdom, through life experience.⁸⁴

With reference to the dramatic works of Schiller, Steiner comments significantly concerning the nature of Schiller's dramas in general, that in these, "Schiller attempted to become clear how a great, transpersonal [law of] destiny exerts an influence within the personality. We have often mentioned this law as the law of karma."⁸⁵ That Steiner sees Schiller's dramatic concepts as expressive of the concept of 'karma' is closely connected with his interest in bringing about an acceptance of this concept, (although within a Christian context). Steiner hoped that gradually in Christendom an acceptance of the concept of karma and repeated earth-lives would occur. In *Die Pforte*, Steiner's view of the concept of karma is presented in detail; it is shown as making understandable, amongst other things, the intense feelings of personal affection or antipathy, between two characters.

⁸³Rudolf Steiner, Dec 19, 1904, unpublished archive lecture.

⁸⁴Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophie, Wiederverkörperung des Geistes und Schicksal*.

⁸⁵Rudolf Steiner, *Ursprung und Ziel der Menschen*, (Dornach: RSV, 1981), 410, „Er suchte sich klar zu werden, wie in das Persönliche das grosse Überpersönliche Schicksal hereinspielt. Wir haben oftmals schon dieses Gesetz als das Karma-gesetz erwähnt.“

Another esoteric-spiritual theme to be found in Schiller's works, and which Steiner experienced as strongly affirmative, concerns esoteric religiosity. Schiller's treatise on the cultural history of the world, *Die Sendung Moses (The mission of Moses)*, emphasizes the existence of the Mystery cults of antiquity, as an important part of history. In this text, Schiller commences by praising the high spirituality attained in the Hebrew people, as expressed in their monotheism, and affirms that the efficacy of this even reaches into his time, "Indeed, in a certain sense it is undeniably true that a great part of the enlightenment which delights us today we have thank to the religion of Moses."⁸⁶

Then, later in this work Schiller focuses on the theme of ancient Egyptian esoteric religiosity, and sees a hidden influence, deriving from the secret Egyptian Mystery teaching of Isis, efficacious in the teachings of the Hebrew prophets. Taking his cue from contemporary writers,⁸⁷ Schiller affirms the similarity of Egyptian and later Hebraic religious tenets,

... the epoptae recognized a single, highest principle of all things, a primal force ... the essence of all being ... under an ancient statue of Isis were to be read the words, "I am that which is", and upon a pillar at Sais a strange ancient inscription, "I am all that is, that was, that will be; no mortal man has ever lifted my veil."⁸⁸

In his *Die Sendung Moses*, Schiller also describes what scholars believe occurred in the initiation rites of the Egyptian god of Isis and Serapis, which he sees as a precursor to the Grecian Mystery

⁸⁶Schiller, *SW*, Bd 17, 377; „Ja, in einem gewissen Sinne ist es unwiderleglich wahr, daß wir der mosaischen Religion einen großen Teil der Aufklärung danken, deren wir uns heutiges Tages erfreuen.“

⁸⁷Schiller, *SW*, Bd. 2, 263, the editors (Helmut Koopmann and Benno von Wiese), mention in particular, the writings of Karl Leonhard Reinhold as formative for Schiller's views here.

⁸⁸*SW*, Bd 17, 385, „Die Epopten erkannten eine einzige höchste Ursache aller Dinge, eine Urkraft der Nature, das Wesen aller Wesen. ... Unter einer alten Säule der Isis las man die Worte, 'Ich bin, was da ist' und auf einer Pyramide zu Saïs fand man die uralte merkwürdige Inschrift; 'Ich bin alles was ist, was war, und was sein wird, kein sterblicher Mensch hat meinen Schleier aufgehoben'.“

cults of Eleusis and Samothrace. Schiller also wrote a remarkably evocative, long poem on the initiatory process in ancient Egypt, at Sais, which we shall note shortly.

To Steiner, the mystery religions of antiquity were likewise the expression of an awareness of spiritual, supra-sensible realities. This awareness existed to a much higher degree in earlier ages, this was a condition of consciousness naturally present in humanity of earlier ages. Consequently, in his treatment of history, Steiner focused more on cultural developments and the strivings of the Mystery Centres, than on military, political and commercial developments. His lecture cycle entitled, *Die Weltgeschichte in anthroposophischer Beleuchtung and als Grundlage der Erkenntnis des Menschengesistes (The History of the World in the Light of Anthroposophy)* treats the development of consciousness of nations, and the primary myths of Mesopotamia as an expression of ancient esoteric religiosity. He devotes lectures to the processes occurring in the esoteric life, in the Hibernian and Ephesian Mysteries. Steiner comments in another lecture cycle on the Mystery history of humanity, that in more ancient times of human history a more penetrating way of perceiving was retained, and consequently,

... one understood something of the permeation of external nature by a soul-element, and because one understood the incorporating of the spirit-soul element into the physical-corporeal, then one understood something of the spirit, as it pulses in wave-like undulations throughout the created world.⁸⁹

To Steiner, the special Mystery sites in which esoteric religiosity was nurtured were places where acolytes had the goal of actively attaining higher spiritual experiences. The earnestness of the spiritual striving that occurred in these Centres was emphasized by Steiner,

⁸⁹Rudolf Steiner, *Perspektiven der Menschheitsentwicklung*, (Dornach: RSV, 1979), 50-51, „ ... der Mensch verstand etwas von dem Seelischen Walten auch in der äußeren Natur, und indem er verstand die Einkörperung des Geistig-Seelischen in das Physisch-Leibliche, verstand er etwas von dem die Welt durchwellenden und durchwallenden Geist.“

Mystery Centres is what one calls those places where the highest questions of the spiritual life were brought before the students, and answered. And in such Mystery Centres the students were not taught in an abstract manner, about such questions. The truths were only made available to them once their soul, their spirit, their entire personality was so constituted that they could see these questions on the right light.⁹⁰

These statements about the esoteric religiosity of antiquity are reminiscent of the Schiller poem, concerning the experiences of an acolyte in the ancient Egyptian cult of Isis, *Das Verschleierte Bild zu Sais*, (*The Veiled Image of Sais*), written ca. 1797. The poem treats the initiatory striving of acolytes in an ancient Egyptian temple community, in which the search for the goddess Isis is the focus. In particular this poem presents the specific dynamics of the spiritual quest, and the consequences of ignoring these. The setting is a mystery centre of the Isis religion in Sais in ancient Egypt.

The full text of the poem is given here, for this reason and also because its primary theme, not the cult of Isis as such, is seen by Steiner as related closely to that of *Die Pforte*.

The Veiled Image of Sais

A young man, whose burning thirst for knowledge
lead him to Sais in Egypt,
there to learn the secret wisdom of the priests
had already hastened through many a degree
With his quick mind;
his thirst for research constantly drove him on,
and scarcely could the Hierophant calm the impatient Seeker.
"What do I have, if I don't have all?" said the youth,
"Is there here such a thing as more or less?"

⁹⁰Rudolf Steiner, *Spirituelle Seelenlehre*, 196, „Mysterienstätten nannte man in alten Zeiten und Orten die Stätten, wo höchste Fragen des Geisteslebens den Schülern beigebracht und beantwortet wurden. Und in solchen Mysterienstätten wurden die Schüler nicht in abstrakter Weise über solche Fragen unterrichtet. Es wurden ihnen die Wahrheiten erst dann überliefert, wenn ihre Seele, ihr Geist, ihre ganze Persönlichkeit, in der Verfassung war, daß sie diese Fragen im richtigen Licht sehen konnten.“

Is thy Truth, like happiness,
merely a total sum, of which
one may possess a greater or lesser amount,
but always possessing it?
Is not Truth a single, indivisible thing?
Take a tone from a harmony,
take a colour out of the rainbow
and all that remains to you is nothing, so long as the
beauteous entirety of tones and colours is missing.
Once when they were speaking thus,
they were standing quietly in a solitary rotunda
wherein a veiled statue of enormous size
attracted the gaze of the youth.
Astonished, he looks at his guide and says:
"What is it that is hiding behind this veil"? –
"The Truth," is the answer –
"What !" called out the other,
but Truth alone is what I am striving for, and it is precisely this
which one is hiding from me ?"

"Arrange that with the deity", responded the Hierophant;
'No mortal", she says, 'will lift this veil until I myself raise it,
And whoever should raise the holy forbidden thing
with guilty hands, they...', says the deity..."
– "Well?"
– " "They will see the Truth' ."
"A remarkable oracular utterance!
You yourself would never have raised it?" –
"I?" "Certainly not! Nor was I ever tempted to do so."
"That I don't understand. If only
this thin partition separates me from the Truth –
"And a law", his guide adds interrupting him –
"more important is this thin cloth, my son, than you realize
– light indeed for thy hand,
yet a hundredweight heavier for your conscience."
To his quarters the youth then returned, engrossed in thought.
the burning desire for knowledge robbed him of sleep,
he tossed around on the bed feverishly,
and about midnight he arose.

Unwillingly his diffident steps lead him to the temple,
it was easy for him to climb the wall,
one bold leap brought the daring one
right into the middle of the rotunda.

There he stands now, and dreadfully
does the lifeless stillness envelop the lone seeker,
relieved only by the hollow echoing
of his footsteps among the secret crypts.
From above, the Moon through the cupola's opening,
cast a pale silvery-blue light,
and the figure under its long veil
glows through the darkness of the rotunda
with a terrible light
as if a God were present.

With uncertain step he approached;
already the insolent hand wants to touch the sacred object;
when a burning heat and coldness flashes through his bones
and pushes him back with unseen arms.
Unhappy youth, what do you intend? –
thus did a faithful voice cry out within him.
Do you want to put the Most Holy to the test?
“No mortal”, spoke the mouth of the Oracle, “lifts this veil
until I myself raise it”.

Yet did not the same mouth also say;
Whoever raises this veil shall see Truth?
Be behind it what may, I will lift the veil!”
In a loud voice, he cries out: “I want to behold it!”

Behold it!

The long shrill echo clangs after him mockingly.
He speaks thus, and has lifted the veil.
“Well”, you ask, “and what was revealed to him here?”
That I don't know. Senseless and pale, thus did the priests
find him the next day, outstretched by the pedestal of the statue
of Isis.

Whatever he there saw and experienced,
his tongue never disclosed it.
Gone forever was his happiness,

a deep sorrow tore him away to an early grave.
“Woe to that person”, were his words warning –
“When impetuous interrogators then beset him:
Woe to him who approaches the Truth through guilt!
It will nevermore bring joy to him.”⁹¹

This poem of Schiller’s takes up his fascination with the esoteric cultic life of ancient Egypt implied in his *Die Sendung Moses*. Steiner lectured extensively on the primary theme explored in this poem, namely, the search for Isis,

This image of Isis, what a lasting impression it makes on us, when we picture it to ourselves, how it stands there in stone, but at the same time the stone is veiled from top to bottom – *the veiled image of Isis*. ... and it has inscribed on it, ‘I am the past, the present and the future ... no mortal has ever lifted my veil’.⁹²

Steiner’s comments on the cognitional tension around the spiritual quest echo those in *The Veiled Image of Sais*; like the great mystic and philosopher Meister Eckart, he emphasizes that what is to be encountered in the journey down into the depths of the human soul is very difficult to describe in human words. Steiner regarded the content of this poem as reflecting an historical instance of a major error which acolytes in the mysteries can make; namely, that of being too hasty in the search for enlightenment, “The young man of Sais wanted to know, unprepared, of the secrets of the spiritual

⁹¹Friedrich Schiller, *Gedichte 1789-1805*, SW Bd. 1, 224-6, *Das verschleierte Bild zu Sais*.

– to avoid a footnote running over several pages, I append the German text to the end of this section.

⁹²Rudolf Steiner, *Innere Entwicklungsimpulse der Menschheit*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1964), 166; „Dieses Isis-Bild, was für einen ergreifenden Eindruck macht es uns, wenn wir es vorstellen, wie es dasteht in Stein, aber in dem Stein zugleich der Schleier von oben bis unten: das verschleierte Bild zu Sais. Und die Inschrift trägt es: Ich bin die Vergangenheit, die Gegenwart, und die Zukunft; meinen Schleier hat noch kein Sterblicher gelüftet.“

world ... he was later reborn ...”⁹³ In effect, to Steiner, The Veiled Image of Isis derived from Schiller’s spiritual awareness, which accessed events in a previous age – not necessarily that of Schiller himself – in ancient Egypt. The misstep by the youth of Sais is a potent example of the moral-ethical challenges which the characters in *Die Pforte* must also encounter.

He maintained that the message of the inscription suggested only that soul who can approach the Mysteries of Isis with reverence may uncover the secrets of Isis. The results of improper questing would be severe,

... in those times in which the ancient wisdom was living, human beings approached this wisdom in the appropriate way, or more precisely, were simply not allowed such access, if they did not approach in the appropriate manner ... the priests of the Isis cult “researched the efficacy of the gods in practical life ... it was certainly necessary that this temple activity was kept holy, for what mischief could have been undertaken, if had not been kept confidential!”⁹⁴

As Steiner was aware, the German poet Novalis has also written on the theme of esoteric spirituality in ancient Egypt, in his work, *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais (The novitiates of Sais)*. In a lecture about the theosophical spirituality prevailing within German Romantics, Steiner comments on this text,

In the truly most theosophical manner, Novalis directly voices that which goes like a beautiful theme through the entire period [of the Romantics], which prevailed in it like a theosophical motto. This is contained in the words [of Novalis]; ‘One of them was successful, he

⁹³Rudolf Steiner, unpublished manuscript of a lecture, of unknown date, ca. 1914; „Wissen wollte der Jüngling zu Sais unvorbereitet von den Geheimnissen der geistigen Welt... er wird wiedergeboren ...“

⁹⁴Steiner, *Innere Entwicklungsimpulse*”, 167, 192; „ ... in den Zeiten, in denen uralte Weisheit lebendig war, die Menschen sich dieser Weisheit in der entsprechenden Weise näherten, respektive gar nicht zugelassen wurden, wenn sie sich ihr nicht in der entsprechenden Weise näherten. Das Hereinwirken der Götter in das praktische Leben erforschte man ... Es war schon notwendig, daß dieser Tempeldienst heilig gehalten wurde, denn welcher Unfug hätte getrieben werden können, wenn er nicht heilig gehalten worden wäre!“

lifted the veil of the goddess at Saïs. But what did he see? – he saw – wonder of wonders – himself.’⁹⁵

These comments from Novalis are not in the text of *Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs*, but are to be found in his notebooks, from May 1798.⁹⁶ On various occasions Steiner elaborated the dangers of entering the Mystery Centre’s spiritual development process in antiquity. Speaking of the Mesopotamian-Egyptian Mysteries, he describes these as taking the acolyte into the hidden recesses of the soul, including the not yet purified ‘lower self’. He maintains that this is the meaning of the expression about the Mysteries, of descending to the door of the underworld, or in Greek Mysteries, of Hades. In his *Das Christentum als Mystische Tatsache (Christianity as Mystic Fact)*, he writes of the responsibility that is involved when the mystagogue takes on the task of guiding an acolyte to the doorway of the Underworld, echoing the allusions in Schiller’s poem,

Terrible is the responsibility which one places on oneself ... It was the view of the mystagogue that one may not take up involvement in this good fortune [of being initiated] in an impious manner. For what then would be the outcome if the Mystagogue betrayed his secret? ... Nothing more than a terrible, life-destroying foreboding would one be then able to impart (to the acolyte). One would have to view that as a crime ... everything (the revelation) would be merely an empty noise ... yet a deity appears before one! It is either everything or nothing. It is

⁹⁵Rudolf Steiner, *Die Welträtsel und die Anthroposophie*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1966), 412, In wirklich denkbar theosophischer Weise spricht gerade Novalis das aus, was wie ein schöner Zug durch die ganze Zeit ging, was diese wie ein theosophisches Motto geistig beherrschte. Es ist in den Worten enthalten: “Einem gelang es, er hob den Schleier der Göttin zu Saïs. – Aber was sah er? Er sah – Wunder des Wunders – sich selbst.“

⁹⁶*Novalis Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe Frierich von Hardenbergs*, Bd. 1, ed. Richard Samuel, (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1978), *Materialien zu Die Lehrlinge zu Saïs*, 234, „Einem gelang es – er hob den Schleyer der Göttin zu Saïs – Aber was sah er? Er sah – Wunder des Wunders – Sich selbst.“

nothing, if you encounter it in the mood in which you encounter everyday objects.⁹⁷

In a lecture late in his career (1918), Steiner treats this quest for Isis as a contemporary dynamic, assimilating it to the search for anthroposophical wisdom, "One should not say that the human being can never in any circumstances lift the veil of Isis, but rather, that person can not lift the veil of Isis, who wants to be united only to the mortal [part of their being], who does want to approach the immortal [part]."⁹⁸ Two years later he told an audience, in a lecture on the search for Isis, that "We must rediscover in a certain sense, the Isis legend, the content of the Mystery of Isis, but we must form it from Imagination in a manner suited to our times."⁹⁹ The term, 'Imagination' here means the first stage of enhanced spiritual consciousness, not the power of fantasy; Steiner's terms for these visionary states will be examined later in the study.

These various references to Schiller's works and to themes found in Schiller, by Steiner from his anthroposophical phase (post 1901), indicate a degree of formative influence, and also demonstrate his

⁹⁷Rudolf Steiner, *Das Christentum als Mystische Tatsache*, (Dornach: RSV, 1976), 25-27: „Furchtbar ist doch die Verantwortlichkeit, die man dadurch auf sich lädt. Es war die Meinung der Mysten, daß in dieses Glück nicht frevelhaft eingegriffen werden dürfte. Denn was wäre es zunächst denn gewesen: wenn der Myste sein Geheimnis ‚verraten‘ hätte? Nicht mehr als eine furchtbare, lebenszerstörende *Ahnung* hätte man ihm geben könnte. Als ein Verbrechen hätte man das auffassen müssen. (Der Myste wird finden,) daß alles leerer Schall ist....Eine Gottheit trete dir entgegen! Sie ist entweder nichts oder alles. Nichts ist sie, wenn du ihr entgegentrittst in der Stimmung, in der du den Dingen des Alltags begegnest.“

⁹⁸Rudolf Steiner, *Mysterienwahrheiten und Weihnachtsimpulse*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1966), 190: „Es sollte nicht gesagt werden, daß der Mensch überhaupt nicht den Schleier des Isis heben könne, sondern nur: ‚Derjenige Mensch kann nicht den Schleier der Isis heben, der sich mit dem Sterblichen ausschließlich verbinden will, der nicht an das Unsterbliche heran will.‘“

⁹⁹Rudolf Steiner, *Die Brücke zwischen der Weltgeistigkeit und dem Physischen des Menschen*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1970), 235, „... wir müssen in einer gewisser Weise die Isislegende, den Inhalt des Isismysteriums wiederfinden, aber wir müssen ihn bilden aus der Imagination heraus gefaßt für unsere Zeit.“

use of these to provide a respected literary context which is supportive of his spiritual-esoteric worldview. Further, the way in which Steiner interprets such works of Schiller's as *The Veiled Image of Sais*, and his prose work, *The Julian Correspondence*, shows how to Steiner there was a similar 'theosophical' acceptance in Schiller of past lives, of karma, and of esoteric religiosity in general.

Another Schiller text which would have been affirmative to the young Steiner's esoteric views, is a poem, believed to be written in 1781 (his first period), *Das Geheimnis der Reminiscenz: an Laura* (*The Secret of Reminiscence: to Laura*), which indicates both pre-existence and the karmic interpretation of personal bonds of love. In reads in part,¹⁰⁰

Motionlessly clinging to your mouth, eternally –
Who can explain to me this rapturous yearning?
And explain too, the delight to drink in your ambience –
to sink, dying, into your being,
when our eyes beckon to each other ...
... ..
... have we already been intertwined?
Is this the reason that our hearts so throbbed?
Had we – in the radiance of a sun since extinguished,
in days of bliss, long since buried –
already melted into one?
Yes! – we had! You were intimately united with me
in aeons which have now passed away;
my Muse beheld it written on the dim slate of the Past:
“united with your loving!”¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰The term 'motionlessly' translates 'starr' well, as nuances of rigidity are inappropriate here; and 'rapturous' is appropriate here for 'Wut'; thirdly, 'ambience', appears appropriate for 'Hauch', as the nuance of 'aura' is implied; cf. Muret-Sanders Dict. 1901, "von einem Körper auströmenden Hauch", aura, nerv(e)-aura."

¹⁰¹Ewig starr an deinem Mund zu hangen/ wer enthüllt mir dieses Blutverlangen?/ Wer die Wollust, deinen Hauch zu trinken/ in dein Wesen, wenn sich Blicke winken/ sterbend zu versinken? Waren unsre Wesen schon verflochten?/ War es darum, daß die Herzen pochten?/ Waren wir im Strahl erloschner Sonnen/ in den Tagen verrauschter

These are subjective verses about personal romantic love, but as the editors of Schiller's poetry make clear, they do incorporate various esoteric-spiritual themes closely allied to those affirmed in Plato's works. These include his doctrine of 'anamnesis', the ability of the soul to remember its prior existence in the World of Ideas. This concept and its corollaries, reincarnation and immortality, were themes present in contemporary discussions in Schiller's life. As Kurscheidt and Oellers point out, reincarnation is present in Vergil's *Aeneid*, a work well known to Schiller.¹⁰²

From a Steiner perspective, Schiller is here affirming a belief in karma; the poem is testifying to the memory of, or at least the conviction of, a young man that in a previous life on Earth he and his beloved were already deeply in love. It is for this reason that now their love has such a potent quality, for, to his delight, his Muse has been able to convey this truth to his searching, ardent mind. Steiner would see as the Muse as the 'guiding angel' of the man. He maintained that these beings specifically hold the memory of the past lifetimes on earth of each individual in their consciousness,

For every person we are to presuppose a being who, because it stands one stage above the human being, guides the individuality from one incarnation to another ... they preserve the memory of one incarnation until the next so to speak, unless the person is able to do this of his own accord.¹⁰³

Wonne/ schon in Eins zerronnen? Ja, wir waren's ! – Innig mir verbunden/ warst du in Aeonen, die verschwunden;/ Meine Muse sah es auf der trüben/ Tafel der Vergangenheit geschrieben: / Eins mit deinem Lieben!“ Schiller, *SW Bd. 1, Gedichte*, 104-5.

¹⁰²Schiller, *SW Bd. 2, Gedichte* (Anmerkungen zu Band 1) 98-99.

¹⁰³Rudolf Steiner, *Geistige Wesenheiten und ihre Widerspiegelung in der physischen Welt*, (Dornach: RSV, 1972), 89-90, „Für jeden Menschen müssen wir voraussetzen eine Wesenheit, welche dadurch, daß sie um eine Stufe höher ist als der Mensch, die Individualität von einer Inkarnation zum andern herleiten ... Wesenheiten, die sozusagen das Gedächtnis bewahren von einer Inkarnation zum andern, solange der Mensch selber es nicht tun kann.“

It was however, primarily in Goethe's works that passages are found of an esoteric or mystical nature which were either formative to the young Steiner or elucidated by him in his anthroposophical phase as supportive of his anthroposophy.

Appendix:

The German text of Schiller's poem, *Das Verschleierte Bild zu Sais*

Ein Jüngling, den des Wissens heißer Durst
Nach Sais in Ägypten trieb, der Priester
Geheime Weisheit zu erlernen, hatte
Schon manchen Grad mit schnellem Geist durchheilt,
Stets riß ihn seine Forschbegierde weiter,
Und kaum besänftigte der Hierophant
Den ungeduldig Strebenden. »Was hab ich,
Wenn ich nicht alles habe?« sprach der Jüngling.
»Gibts etwa hier ein Weniger und Mehr?
Ist deine Wahrheit wie der Sinne Glück
Nur eine Summe, die man größer, kleiner
Besitzen kann und immer doch besitzt?
Ist sie nicht eine einzge, ungeteilte?
Nimm einen Ton aus einer Harmonie,
Nimm eine Farbe aus dem Regenbogen,
Und alles, was dir bleibt, ist nichts, solange
Das schöne All der Töne fehlt und Farben.«

Indem sie einst so sprachen, standen sie
In einer einsamen Rotonde still,
Wo ein verschleiert Bild von Riesengröße
Dem Jüngling in die Augen fiel. Verwundert
Blickt er den Führer an und spricht: »Was ist's,
Das hinter diesem Schleier sich verbirgt?«
»Die Wahrheit«, ist die Antwort. - »Wie?« ruft jener,
»Nach Wahrheit streb ich ja allein, und diese
Gerade ist es, die man mir verhüllt?«

»Das mache mit der Gottheit aus«, versetzt
Der Hierophant. »Kein Sterblicher, sagt sie,
Rückt diesen Schleier, bis ich selbst ihn hebe.
Und wer mit ungeweihter, schuldger Hand
Den heiligen, verbotnen früher hebt,
Der, spricht die Gottheit -« - »Nun?« - »Der sieht die Wahrheit.«

»Ein seltsamer Orakelspruch! Du selbst,
Du hättest also niemals ihn gehoben?«
»Ich? Wahrlich nicht! Und war auch nie dazu
Versucht.« - »Das fass ich nicht. Wenn von der Wahrheit
Nur diese dünne Scheidewand mich trennte -«
»Und ein Gesetz«, fällt ihm sein Führer ein.
»Gewichtiger, mein Sohn, als du es meinst,
Ist dieser dünne Flor - für deine Hand
Zwar leicht, doch zentnerschwer für dein Gewissen.«

Der Jüngling ging gedankenvoll nach Hause.
Ihm raubt des Wissens brennende Begier
Den Schlaf, er wälzt sich glühend auf dem Lager
Und rafft sich auf um Mitternacht. Zum Tempel
Führt unfreiwillig ihn der scheue Tritt.
Leicht ward es ihm, die Mauer zu ersteigen,
Und mitten in das Innre der Rotonde
Trägt ein beherzter Sprung den Wagenden.

Hier steht er nun, und grauenvoll umfängt
Den Einsamen die lebenlose Stille,
Die nur der Tritte hohler Widerhall
In den geheimen Grüften unterbricht.
Von oben durch der Kuppel Öffnung wirft
Der Mond den bleichen, silberblauen Schein,
Und furchtbar wie ein gegenwärtger Gott
Erglänzt durch des Gewölbes Finsternisse
In ihrem langen Schleier die Gestalt.

Er tritt hinan mit ungewissem Schritt,
Schon will die freche Hand das Heilige berühren,
Da zuckt es heiß und kühl durch sein Gebein
Und stößt ihn weg mit unsichtbarem Arme.
Unglücklicher, was willst du tun? So ruft
In seinem Innern eine treue Stimme.
Versuchen den Allheiligen willst du?
Kein Sterblicher, sprach des Orakels Mund,
Rückt diesen Schleier, bis ich selbst ihn hebe.
Doch setzte nicht derselbe Mund hinzu:

Wer diesen Schleier hebt, soll Wahrheit schauen?
»Sei hinter ihm, was will! Ich heb ihn auf.«
(Er ruft mit lauter Stimm.) »Ich will sie schauen.« Schauen!
Gellt ihm ein langes Echo spottend nach.

Er spricht und hat den Schleier aufgedeckt.
Nun, fragt ihr, und was zeigte sich ihm hier?
Ich weiß es nicht. Besinnungslos und bleich,
So fanden ihn am andern Tag die Priester
Am Fußgestell der Isis ausgestreckt.
Was er allda gesehen und erfahren,
Hat seine Zunge nie bekannt. Auf ewig
War seines Lebens Heiterkeit dahin,
Ihn riß ein tiefer Gram zum frühen Grabe.
»Weh dem«, dies war sein warnungsvolles Wort,
Wenn ungestüme Frager in ihn drangen,
»Weh dem, der zu der Wahrheit geht durch Schuld,
Sie wird ihm nimmermehr erfreulich sein.«

1B2: Goethe's 'primal skeleton', 'primal plant' and Steiner's 'life-force'

Our concern in this section, and throughout the study, is to examine the use of Goethe by Steiner, and the influence of Goethe upon Steiner's thoughts, it is not to examine Goethe himself. The major significance of Goethe for Steiner in his early years was the stimulus he found in Goethe's writings for his own conclusions regarding the cognitional validity of spiritual experiences, or at least of 'intuitive' thoughts. In his later years, Steiner referred to passages in Goethe's writings which he viewed as illustrative of his own anthroposophical teachings. There are three books by Steiner, all written in his earlier years, which critique the worldview of Goethe. One of these comprises the collected editorial comments from Steiner's work on the first publication of Goethe's scientific writings, which we have noted earlier, the other two were specifically written on the implications of Goethe's efforts for epistemology.

In his early years, Steiner had focused on Goethe's efforts to discern the purpose or Idea implicit in the form and qualities of the sense perceptible.¹⁰⁴ Later, in a series of public lectures on philology and anthroposophy, Steiner refers to a conversation of Goethe's in which he comments on the words of Albrecht von Haller (1708-1777) that, "No created spirit penetrates into the interior of Nature ... blessed is the person to whom she shows only the outer shell." Steiner quotes Goethe reply to this,

... 'For sixty years I have heard this repeated. I cursed it, when I heard it, but surreptitiously ... Nature has neither kernel nor shell, she is everything at one and the same time; test yourself whenever you can, whether for the most part, you be kernel or shell!'

Steiner then comments on Goethe's response to Haller that,

¹⁰⁴Rudolf Steiner, *Grundlinien einer Erkenntnistheorie der Goetheschen Weltanschauung, mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Schiller*", 1886 (*Principal features of an epistemological theory of the Goethean worldview, with particular reference to Schiller*) and *Goethes Weltanschauung (Goethe's worldview)*, 1897.

If a person develops their kernel in the Goethean sense, such a person will reach into the kernel, the essence of nature, but only after infinitely long, earnest and sincere research work. For this essence of nature is manifest in the human being. And what is reflected in the human being is, correctly understood, nothing other than this essence of nature. Spirit is nothing other than the blossom and fruit of nature. Nature is, in a certain respects, the roots of the spirit.¹⁰⁵

One striking example of Goethe's approach to scientific research is his discovery of the intermaxillary bone in the human skeleton. In his capacity as editor of Goethe's scientific writings, Steiner explains that a significant scientific achievement of Goethe, namely discovering the intermaxillary bone, (a tiny bone in the jaw) was ultimately due to his belief in the archetypal Idea. Steiner writes that Goethe understood that the skeleton of the human being must contain, or at least during its metamorphoses possess for a while, the same foundational bone structures as those present in the animal kingdom. This viewpoint derived from Goethe's intuition that the Earth's ecology provided one primal skeletal form for all animals, from which humanity then developed its own skeleton.

However, although it was an accepted fact in Goethe's time that indeed the human skeleton did have virtually all bone formations of the animal kingdom in it, there was the one exception, that is the intermaxillary bone. It was understood that this does not exist in the human skeleton. Goethe's discovery was received with much interest by prominent zoologists; two prominent zoologists, Johann

¹⁰⁵Rudolf Steiner, *Die Ergänzung heutiger Wissenschaften durch Anthroposophie*, (Dornach: RSV, 1973), 150 „Ins Innre der Natur, dringt kein erschaffner Geist ... Glückselig, wem sie nur die äußere Schale weist'. Goethe sagte dagegen, ‚Das hör ich sechzig Jahre wiederholen. Ich fluchte drauf, aber verstoßen; ... Natur hat weder Kern noch Schale, alles ist sie mit einemale, Dich prüfe du nur allermeist, Ob du Kern oder Schale seist!, Entwickelt in dieser Goetheschen Gesinnung der Mensch seinen Kern, dann dringt er auch vor, wenn auch nur in unendlich langer, ernster und aufrichtiger Forschungsarbeit – in den Kern, in das Wesen der Natur. Denn dieses Wesen der Natur, es prägt sich aus im Menschen. Und was sich im Menschen spiegelt ist, richtig verstanden, nichts anderes als der Natur Blüte und Frucht. Natur ist in gewisser Beziehung des Geistes Wurzel“.

Heinrich Merck (1741-1791) and Samuel Thomas Sömmerring (1755-1830) at first rejected the discovery, but eventually acknowledged that Goethe had made a major discovery.¹⁰⁶

Steiner emphasises that in his research, Goethe was inspired by a postulate directly linked to the Platonic Idea, namely that the *idea* of the human body is attained by metamorphosis from the *idea* underlying the skeletal structures of the animal kingdom. The implication of this is that therefore in the skeleton of humans, all the primary animal bone formations must occur, even if only early in the development of the skeleton. As supportive evidence for this, Steiner refers to a letter Goethe wrote to Knebel in 1784, accompanying his treatise on zoology. In this letter Goethe writes,

... one can not find anything that differentiates at all between a human being and an animal. Rather, the human being is most closely related to the animals. The inherent correspondence of the entirety makes each creature what it is ... and so again is every creature but a tone, a nuance, in a great harmony, which one also has to study in its full entirety, otherwise each separate thing is a dead letter."¹⁰⁷

As this letter indicates, Goethe, following the implications of the archetypal Idea, pursued his research, and eventually through some attentive observation of skeletons, perceived in a part of the human skeleton, during a phase of its growth, the transient existence of this bone. He was consequently able to establish scientifically, that indeed there is such a bone in the human being. In addition, Goethe's research discovered that all specialized bones in the animal were metamorphoses of the basic vertebrae. Today the existence of the intermaxillary bone is a clearly recognized fact.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶Rudolf Steiner, *Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, 60-72.

¹⁰⁷Goethes Briefe, HA Bd 1, 459, "... man nämlich den Unterscheid des Menschen vom Thier in nichts einzelner finden könne. Vielmehr ist der Mensch aufs nächste mit den Thieren verwandt. Die Übereinstimmung des Ganzen macht ein jedes Geschöpf zu dem was es ist ... Und so ist wieder jede Creatur nur ein Ton, eine Schattierung einer grossen Harmonie, die man auch im ganzen und grossen studieren muß sonst ist jedes einzelne eine todter Buchstabe."

¹⁰⁸"Goethe's activities in the scientific field; studies on the metamorphosis of plants and animals, his discoveries of the intermaxillary bone in man

To Steiner this achievement of Goethe embodied his concept that the meditative contemplation of the sense world, phenomenologically, can lead one to perception of the Idea. Steiner's comments, as editor of the Kürschner edition of Goethe's scientific works, indicate how, already in his thirties, he saw this achievement of Goethe in terms of the Platonic idea and in terms of subtle life-energies in nature,

This was a discovery of the most wide ranging significance, for it was thereby shown that all members of an organic entirety are identical, according to the Idea; and that 'inwardly metamorphosed' organic substances open up externally in differing ways. Also that it is one and the same thing, which, on the lower level as spinal column nerve substance, and on a higher level as sense organ nerves, opens itself up in different ways to the external world. The latter open themselves as receptive, registering, comprehending sense-organs. Every living thing is thereby shown to be embedded in a power that forms and moulds it outwards from within; a living thing was now for the first time comprehended as truly living.¹⁰⁹

In addition to skeletal metamorphosis, Goethe's work on plant metamorphosis was also of great significance to Steiner in terms of the archetypal Idea. Goethe's research on plant metamorphosis lead him to the concept of the *Urpflanze*, a suprasensible primal plant from which all plants derive, in all their various forms. To Goethe the individual forms of the flora are expressions of the primal plant, which in itself has the capacity to assume numerous forms, and

and his ...", Website: Google, Goethe Museum, Düsseldorf, 6th July 2004.

¹⁰⁹Rudolf Steiner, *Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, 67, „Dies war eine Entdeckung von der weittragendsten Bedeutung, es war damit bewiesen, daß alle Glieder eines organischen Ganzen der Idee nach identisch sind und daß «innerlich ungeformte» organische Massen sich nach außen in *verschiedener* Weise aufschließen, daß es ein und dasselbe ist, was auf niederer Stufe als Rückenmarksnerv, auf höherer als Sinnesnerv sich zu dem die Außenwelt aufnehmenden, ergreifenden, erfassenden Sinnesorgane aufschließt. Jedes Lebendige war damit in einer von innen heraus sich formenden, gestaltenbildenden Kraft aufgezeigt; es war als *wahrhaft Lebendiges* jetzt erst begriffen.“

which in a specific case assumes that form which is most appropriate for the external environmental conditions. These external conditions are simply inducements to cause the inner powers of metamorphosis to be expressed in a special way. These latter alone are the constitutive principle, the creative power in the plant.

Steiner quotes from a letter Goethe wrote (Naples, 17 May 1787) to Herder about the *Urpflanze*, which he refers to as a 'Proteus',

Actually, I had realized that in the organ of the plant, which we normally refer to as leaf, lies hidden the true Proteus, which can conceal itself and manifest itself in all forms [of the plant]. Retrospectively and in its further life, the plant is always only leaf, so indivisibly united with the future seed, that a person cannot conceive of the one without the other.¹¹⁰

Goethe has drawn the term, 'Proteus' from Greek mythology, where it is a minor sea god, a shape shifter. Goethe incorporates Proteus as a character in *Faust*, (Part Two, Act 2, Classical Walpurgis Night, lines 8225-8460), where, as Trunz explains (*HA Bd. 3, 570*), he is virtually equated with eternally metamorphosing matter. For these reasons, Goethe also called it a *hen kai pan* (One and All) of the plant world (letter of 6th September 1787).¹¹¹

¹¹⁰Rudolf Steiner, *Goethes Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften* (Dornach; RSV, 1973), 35: originally published in J. W. Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche*, 40 Bände, eds. Friedmar Apel et al. 1. Abtlg., 15-2, *Italienische Reise* ed. Christoph Michel and Hans-Georg Dewitz 2 Bde., (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993), Bd. 1, 344, „Es war mir nämlich aufgegangen, daß in demjenigen Organ (der Pflanze), welches wir gewöhnlich als Blatt ansprechen, der wahre Proteus verborgen liege, der sich in allen Gestaltungen verstecken und offenbaren könne. Rückwärts und vorwärts ist die Pflanze immer nur Blatt, mit dem künftigen Keime so unzertrennlich vereint, daß man sich eins ohne das andere nicht denken darf.“

¹¹¹Rudolf Steiner, *Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, 34, „Bei Goethe sind die einzelnen Veränderungen verschiedene Äußerungen des Urorganismus, der in sich selbst die Fähigkeit hat, mannigfache Gestalten anzunehmen und in einem bestimmten Falle jene annimmt, welche den ihn umgebenden Verhältnissen der Außenwelt am angemessensten ist. Diese äußeren Verhältnisse sind bloß Veranlassung, daß die inneren Gestaltungskräfte in einer besonderen Weise zur Erscheinung kommen. Diese letzteren allein sind das konstitutive Prinzip, das Schöpferische

Goethe also had here the support of the great philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), who wrote to him in 1821,

... to have detected the Simple and Abstract, which you so appropriately call the ur-phenomenon ... and to separate it from other ambient factors that are accidental to it – to comprehend it in abstracto, as we call this process ... this I regard as a matter of great spiritual understanding of nature and that process itself I regard as the truly scientific aspect of knowledge in this field...¹¹²

Steiner regarded this as a major discovery, for he considered that Goethe, through his phenomenological approach, had perceived another manifestation of the prevailing Idea, the archetypal Idea of the plant. That is, to Steiner, Goethe had apprehended the concept which belongs to the percept 'plant', the archetype of the plant form, extant in the realm of Ideas.

In a conversation with Schiller, Goethe discussed his perception of the *Urpflanze*, and wrote a report of the discussion, in a brief autobiographical text, called *Glückliches Ereignis (Happy Event)*. Goethe reported that through his plant observations, he had experienced the *Urpflanze*, and could confirm that it was a reality. Schiller declares that it was not possible to have an actual experience of such a thing, because it is an idea, to which Goethe then retorts, "It could be very pleasing for me, if without knowing it, I have Ideas and indeed can see them with my eyes."¹¹³ The comments by Steiner on this discussion show that he considers the substantiation of his own epistemology is to be found in Goethe's approach,

in der Pflanze. Daher nennt es Goethe am 6. September 1787 auch ein hen kai pan (Ein und Alles) der Pflanzenwelt." The letter to Herder is published in Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. 1, 423.

¹¹²Rudolf Steiner, *Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, 226, "... das Einfache und Abstrakte, das Sie sehr treffend das Urphänomen nennen ... auszuspiiren, es von den andern ihm selbst zufälligen Umgebungen zu befreien, - es abstract, wie wir dies heißen, aufzufassen, dies halte ich für eine Sache des großen geistigen Natursinns, sowie jenen Gang überhaupt für das wahrhaft Wissenschaftliche der Erkenntnis in diesem Felde ..."

¹¹³*Goethes Werke*, HA Bd 10, 540-41, „Das kann mir sehr lieb sein, wenn ich Ideen habe, ohne es zu wissen, und sie sogar mit Augen sehe.“

For Goethe there is one source of knowledge only, the world of experience, in which the world of ideas is included. For him it is impossible to speak of experience and idea, because to him, the idea is there before the eyes as a result of the spiritual experience, just as the sense world lies before the physical eyes.¹¹⁴

Steiner then comments further, consolidating the basis for his interpretation of Goethe, that the question, “what is the relationship – outside of the human being – between Idea and the sense world?” is an unsound one for the Goethean worldview ... because for it there exists outside the human being no sense world (nature) which is apart from the Idea.”¹¹⁵ But this conclusion of Steiner’s, whilst invoking the Platonic Idea, also contains within it an implication which invalidates an aspect of Platonism. It refutes a central tenet of the worldview which gradually developed from the Platonic writings, namely that there is an unbridgeable gap between the Idea and the observer.

Steiner’s book, *Goethes Weltanschauung*, written towards the end of his time in the Goethe archives (1897), deals with this. He refers to Plato’s famous account of the cave, and comments that, “The Platonic worldview tears the mental image of the universe apart, into two pieces, into the mental image of an illusory world and into another, of the Idea world, which alone is meant to correspond to the true, eternal reality.”¹¹⁶ Plato’s myth of the cave is given in Book Seven of *The Republic* and teaches that the perceived

¹¹⁴Rudolf Steiner, *Goethes Weltanschauung*, (Dornach: RSV, 1979), 23, „Für Goethe gibt es nur eine Quelle der Erkenntnis, die Erfahrungswelt, in welcher die Ideenwelt eingeschlossen ist. Für ihn ist es unmöglich, zu sagen: Erfahrung *und* Idee, weil ihm die Idee durch die geistige Erfahrung so vor dem geistigen Auge liegt, wie die sinnliche Welt vor dem physischen.“

¹¹⁵Rudolf Steiner, *Weltanschauung*, 29, „Deshalb kann man sagen, für die Goethesche Weltanschauung ist die Frage, ‘welches Verhältnis besteht *außerhalb des Menschen* zwischen Idee und Sinneswelt?’ eine ungesunde, weil es für sie keine Sinneswelt (Natur) ohne Idee *außerhalb des Menschen* gibt.“

¹¹⁶Rudolf Steiner, *Weltanschauung*, 26, „In zwei Teile reißt die platonische Anschauung die Vorstellung des Weltganzen auseinander, in die Vorstellung einer Scheinwelt und eine andere der Ideenwelt, der allein wahre, ewige Wirklichkeit entsprechen soll.“

images of objects in the physical world has the same relationship to the reality of those objects, as does the shadows of people thrown up onto a wall, to the actual people.¹¹⁷

Steiner proceeds to explain his disagreement with Platonists who separate the archetypal Idea from the perceived object, by assuming an insurmountable gap between them,

The difference between Idea and perception has a validity only when one is discussing the way in which human knowledge arises. The human being must allow the [material] things to speak to him in a twofold manner. Of one part of their being, they speak voluntarily. He only needs to listen carefully. But the other part he has to illicit from them. He must make his thinking active, then his inner life fills itself with the Idea of the things. The scene of action is within the personality, which is also where the things unveil their Ideal inner nature. They declare that which remains hidden forever to external experience.¹¹⁸

Steiner concludes that Platonists, in separating out the Idea from the sense world, has given to western intellectual development a completely superfluous question, with which it has been preoccupied for centuries. Steiner, as editor of Goethe's scientific writings, comments here,

Whoever acknowledges in his thinking a perceptual capacity which exceeds the sense-perceptible, that person must also by necessity acknowledge objects which exist beyond the sense perceptible reality. The objects of thinking however are the Ideas; for in the process of

¹¹⁷Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey, (London: Heinemann, 1963), 125.

¹¹⁸Rudolf Steiner, *Weltanschauung*, 27, „Die Unterscheidung von Idee und Wahrnehmung hat nur eine Berechtigung, wenn von der Art gesprochen wird, wie die menschliche Erkenntnis zustande kommt. Der Mensch muß die Dinge auf zweifache Art zu sich sprechen lassen. Einen Teil ihrer Wesenheit sagen sie freiwillig. Er braucht nur hinzuhorchen. Dies ist der ideenfreie Teil der Wirklichkeit. Den anderen aber muß er ihnen entlocken. Er muß sein Denken in Bewegung setzen, dann erfüllt sich sein Inneres mit den Ideen der Dinge. Im Inneren der Persönlichkeit ist der Schauplatz, auf dem auch die Dinge ihr ideelles Innere enthüllen. Das sprechen sie aus, was der äußeren Anschauung ewig verborgen bleibt.

thinking taking hold of the Idea it merges into the primal foundations of cosmic existence; that which is efficacious from without [thus] enters into the spirit of the human being; it becomes one with the objective reality in its highest potency. The becoming aware of the Idea in its [full] reality is the true communion of the human being. The Idea is the content of subjective thinking, rather the result of research ... to cognize means; to supplement the half reality of the sense perception with the perceiving of thinking, so that the representation becomes complete.¹¹⁹

Returning to Goethe's "Proteus", Steiner sees this to be the invisible factor in the plant world, which is the underlying, directing force in the plant. In Steiner's view, this discovery also means that perception of the physical object, and the conclusion that it is complete in itself, was now shown to no longer be valid. Instead, the plant is now to be seen as a unified reality which requires perception of the Idea behind it, and this perceptual process can be applied to any other created object,

Physical perceiving was no longer sufficient, we must conceptually understand the unity, if we want to explain the phenomenal. Through this [discovery of Goethe] however, perceiving and concept become separated from each other [with regard to the plant world]. Now the concept hovers above that which is perceived, the connection between the two is difficult to see. Whereas with the inorganic world, concept and reality are one, but now [through Goethe] they appear to diverge [in regard to plants], and to belong to two different worlds. What one sees with the senses in this situation does not appear to have its validity, its real nature in itself. The object no longer appears to be explainable

¹¹⁹Rudolf Steiner, *Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, 125, 150, „Wer dem Denken seine über die Sinnesauffassung hinausgehende Wahrnehmungsfähigkeit zuerkennt, der muß ihm notgedrungen auch Objekte zuerkennen, die über die bloße sinnenfällige Wirklichkeit hinaus liegen. Die Objekte des Denkens sind aber die Ideen, indem sich das Denken der Idee bemächtigt, verschmilzt es mit dem Urgrunde des Weltendaseins; das, was außen wirkt, tritt in den Geist des Menschen ein: er wird mit der objektiven Wirklichkeit auf ihrer höchsten Potenz eins. Das Gewahrwerden der Idee in der Wirklichkeit ist die wahre Kommunion des Menschen. ... Die Idee ist nicht Inhalt des subjektiven Denkens, sondern Forschungsresultate! ... erkennen heißt: zu der halben Wirklichkeit der Sinnenerfahrung die Wahrnehmung des Denkens hinzufügen, auf daß ihr Bild vollständig werde ...“

from itself, because its concept is not taken from itself [as molecular reality], but from something else.¹²⁰

Steiner's point here is that whilst even the mineral kingdom cannot be fully perceived without access to the archetypal idea, it can at least appear to be a cognized without such access. But once the element of life-processes is allowed in a material object, Steiner maintains that a gap opens between the object and the concept, the object can no longer be honestly regarded as understandable, for its behaviour breaks the laws of inorganic matter. The reason Steiner saw a gap existing between the plant world and the concept which we normally have of a plant, is that he ascribes to the plant the additional element, namely a subtle life force.

That is, to Steiner the life-processes that differentiate minerals from plants are due to the efficacy of an invisible life force. In other words, Steiner concluded that Goethe's *Urpflanze* and Proteus demonstrated that he had perception not only of the archetypal Idea of 'a plant' as such, but also as a result of this enhanced consciousness, an intuitive perception of a subtle, non-molecular factor in a plant which makes such life processes possible.

The above comments of Steiner's demonstrate his conviction that living organisms require the efficacy of an energy field, or life force organism in order to function. Goethe had perceived, according to Steiner, that the growth process, through which the archetypal form was being brought into reality, was itself derived from a non-molecular reality, a subtle life-force. Specifically this happens with the metamorphoses that occur in vegetation (and other living

¹²⁰Rudolf Steiner, *Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, 74, „Es genügt die Anschauung nicht mehr, wir müssen die Einheit begrifflich erfassen, wenn wir die Erscheinungen erklären wollen. Dadurch aber tritt eine Entfernung von Anschauung und Begriff ein; sie scheinen sich nicht mehr zu decken; der Begriff schwebt über der Anschauung. Es wird schwer, den Zusammenhang beider einzusehen. Während in der unorganischen Natur Begriff und Wirklichkeit eins waren, scheinen sie hier auseinanderzugeben und eigentlich zwei verschiedenen Welten anzugehören. Die Anschauung, welche sich den Sinnen unmittelbar darbietet, scheint ihre Begründung, ihre Wesenheit nicht in sich selbst zu tragen. Das Objekt scheint aus sich selbst nicht erklärbar, weil sein Begriff nicht von ihm selbst, sondern von etwas anderem entnommen ist.“

organism). These life-energies have power over molecular processes. Hence he maintains that Goethe, in considering the phenomenon of plant metamorphosis, is in effect drawing attention to a sphere beyond molecular substance, beyond matter.

That is, Steiner concludes that in the chemicals of the plant's organism there is no explanation for this apparently intelligent and complex phenomenon of metamorphosis. To Steiner, this Proteus is what could be termed a life-force organism, efficacious within the biochemistry of any living body. It is very likely that Steiner would today maintain that the genetic substances now regarded as causing the metamorphosing of plant forms, are themselves in turn responding to this life-force of the plant.

He refers to this life-force as the plant's 'ether-body'. Steiner maintains that the human being also has such an energy field around the physical body. In his *Theosophie*, he comments that around every physical body is an invisible energy form, called an 'ether-body' or a 'formative force body'. It is "a real, independent entity which first calls forth ... physical materials and forces into life ... The ether-body is an organism which preserves the physical-body every moment during life from dissolution."¹²¹

In his anthroposophical works, Steiner strives to demonstrate that such an energy-field is not a theoretical construct which he has projected onto the given world reality, but is an actuality. However he is fully aware of the discredited 'ether postulate' of post-Renaissance thinkers, and emphasizes that his life-force concept or ether energies is not to be equated with this,

It is not of some imaginary phantasm what anthroposophical spiritual science identifies as a supra-sensible ether-body or life-body. It is not the hypothetical ether-body, which science has rightly relinquished; it is something which results from a thoroughly factual perceiving, and which for the *strengthened* process of forming mental images becomes

¹²¹Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophie*, Deutsch-Englisch Ausgabe, (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1975), 50, ,, ... eine selbständige, wirkliche Wesenheit, welche die genannten physischen Stoffe und Kräfte erst zum Leben ruft ... Der Lebensleib ist eine Wesenheit durch welche in jedem Augenblicke während des Lebens der physische Leib von dem Zerfalle bewahrt wird. "

a reality, once it has been developed – just as the external sense-world is a reality.¹²²

The above extract builds upon his earlier epistemological conclusions as to the validity of perceiving, including in spheres beyond the sense-world, and his argument that the limits to knowledge are not absolute. He maintains that life-processes in the organic world and cell division, such as occurs in healing and in reproduction, are maintained by these life energies. In these life forces there is an imprint of the template (itself from the realm of Ideas) of the physical object, for example, the shape of a flower, and its primary characteristics. In effect, Steiner understands this composite entity to be Goethe's Proteus.

However, Steiner also found much else, of a directly esoteric-religious nature, in Goethe which resonated with his own spiritual convictions, some of which is implicit in *Die Pforte*.

¹²²Rudolf Steiner, *Die Wirklichkeit der höheren Welten*, (Dornach; VRSN, 1962), lect. of 25 Nov.1921; 21, „Es ist nichts phantastisch Ersonenes, was die anthroposophische Geisteswissenschaft als übersinnlichen Äther- oder Lebensleib anspricht. Es ist nicht die hypothetische alte Lebenskraft, die mit recht von der Wissenschaft verlassen worden ist, es ist etwas, was sich in ganz realer Anschauung ergibt, was eine Wirklichkeit wird für das verstärkte Vorstellungsleben, das entwickelt worden ist, wie die äußere Sinneswelt eine Wirklichkeit ist.“

1B3: Goethe's esoteric religiosity (the Rosicrucians) and a Platonic 'Devachan'

Apart from the Goethean approach to cognitive processes and the plant kingdom, there are many other elements in the works of Goethe which Rudolf Steiner referred to as supportive of his own worldview. In a letter written to a friend when he was twenty-eight, Steiner comments that to him, Goethe was an esotericist in the best meaning of the word. He then quotes what he sees as a significant phrase used by Goethe from 1812, which was not yet published, namely a brief enigmatic note-book entry which simply states, "The exoteric and the esoteric".¹²³ Here Steiner is obviously regarding the two words as referring to privileged initiatory information, and the lack of same, and this may be the case in this Goethean note-book entry. Goethe also used these words in their alternative meaning, namely specialist knowledge and popular, commonly known ideas, for example in his *Maxims and Reflections* (no. 474) he writes, "Only through an enhanced procedure can the sciences exert an influence on the external world; for actually they are all esoteric and they can only become exoteric through the improvement of an activity of some kind. All other participation leads to nothing."¹²⁴

However, Steiner's interpretation here is reasonable in view of the well known interest of Goethe in esoteric-mystical themes, this is illustrated for example in his long poem *Die Geheimnisse* (*The Secrets*) which shall be considered in this section. To Steiner, the esotericist is that person who – after assiduous study of spiritual ideas – is capable of acquiring an understanding of lofty esoteric-spiritual truths, because through meditation he has developed the capacity to directly experience spiritual realms.¹²⁵ His book on

¹²³Rudolf Steiner, *Briefe*, 2, 54, „... Goethe ... ein Esoteriker in des Wortes bester Bedeutung ...“, to F. Eckstein, Nov. 1890.

¹²⁴*Goethes Werke*, HA Bd 12, „Nur durch eine erhöhte Praxis sollten die Wissenschaften auf die äußere Welt wirken; denn eigentlich sind sie alle esoterisch und können nur durch Verbessern irgendeines Tuns exoterisch werden. Alle übrige Teilnahme führt zu nichts.“

¹²⁵Rudolf Steiner, *Die geistigen Wesenheiten in den Himmelskörpern und Naturreichen*, (Dornach: RSV, 1974), 19, „Die Esoterik beginnt nicht erst mit der okkulten Entwicklung. In dem Augenblicke, wo wir uns mit irgendeiner geisteswissenschaftlichen Vereinigung verbinden und

meditation and initiation, *Knowledge of the higher worlds, how is it attained?*, is intended to help his students, after an assiduous study of his research, and the adoption of a more meditative life style, to become esotericists.

A major theme in Steiner's anthroposophy is that of esoteric religious groups of earlier ages, or the Mystery-history of earlier ages, as we have seen. In his Weimar period, Goethe wrote a long poem called *Die Geheimnisse (The Secrets)* in which he expounds at length on the nature of a secret, esoteric group in medieval Europe. The poem is obviously treating an esoteric theme of some significance to Goethe, presenting as it does, a glimpse of a mystical brotherhood. Accordingly, for this poem, Goethe employed a special instance of the iambic metre, the 'ottava rima', which as Atkins and Kastner point out, he only uses for especially contemplative elegiac poems, such as the 'Zueignung des Faust (the Dedication to 'Faust')'.¹²⁶

This poem, like Schiller's *The Veiled Image at Sais*, is concerned with esoteric spiritual activity in an earlier epoch. The poem itself, though long, is a fragment, never completed by Goethe, which recounts the journey of a pilgrim in medieval Europe to a monastic building which was home to a mystic Christian Order. There are twelve knights in the Order, and the symbol of the Order is a cross with roses entwined around it. It is clear that this poem does specifically incorporate themes found in esoteric literature about the Rosicrucians, especially as found in the writings of the mystical alchemist, Johann Valentin Andreae.¹²⁷

Steiner viewed the poem as having especial importance, through affirming the existence of an actual, historical Rosicrucian movement in earlier centuries. Consequently, he uses this poem on a number of occasions to affirm his understanding of the principles and ideas of the Rosicrucians. He does not regard any so-called 'Rosicrucian' organisation of today as part of this earlier movement. He told an audience in 1906 that the poem presents the

mit unserem ganzen Herzen dabei sind und fühlen, was uns in den Lehren der Geisteswissenschaft liegt, da schon beginnt die Esoterik, da beginnt unsere Seele sich umzuwandeln ...“ (syntax in original)

¹²⁶Goethe's Poems, ed. Henry Gibson Atkins and L. E. Atkins, (London: Blackie & Son, undated), lvi-lvii.

¹²⁷Erich Trunz, *Goethes Werke, HA*, Bd 2, 588.

spiritual ideals of the Rosicrucians to unite, and then renew, all the major spiritual-esoteric wisdom of humanity. He refers here to Goethe's comments that each of the twelve knights of the Order which has the rose-cross as its symbol represent a religious stream.¹²⁸ The pilgrim's encounter with the brotherhood dwelling in this place is replete with allusions to esoteric spiritual activity. Our interest here is to see how Steiner relates to, and uses, Goethean texts, rather than the circumstances of such Goethean material. Several verses from this epic will be given here, these are among the verses which were quoted by Steiner in a lecture on this poem,

And as at length he has attained the summit,
Below a softly sloping valley lies;
his quiet look with inward pleasure brightens,
Before the forest full of joy he spies
a stately building in a greening field,
which the departing sun with lustre dyed.
Ere long he nears through meadows dewy damp
a monastery lit with gleaming lamp ...

The poem continues, the narrator informing us that the pilgrim espies a cross, intertwined with roses, affixed to the wall of the remote chapel, before which the pilgrim stands in reverence,

... on the arch of the closed door
he sees a mysterious image.
He stands and contemplates and lightly whispers words
of worship, which well up from his heart ...
The cross here is densely entwined with roses.
Who has added the roses to the cross?

Some verses later, the pilgrim has been welcomed in, and is told of the mysterious knowledge and remarkable significance of this Order,

¹²⁸Rudolf Steiner, *Kosmogonie*, (Dornach: RSV, 1979), 69, „Nach einer Erklärung des Dichters, die Goethe selbst jungen Leuten gegeben hat, repräsentiert jeder der zwölf Ritter des Rosenkreuzes eine religiöse Strömung.“ Goethe's comments are published by Trunz, in *HA*, Bd. 2, 587.

Miraculous were the paths which lead thee here,
 The aged brother says in friendly tone to his guest:
 Oh, let these symbols bid thee stay until
 Thou hast learnt of many heroic deeds;
 For what is here concealed can never be guessed'
 Until we will confide to thee,
 Indeed thou dost divine much of what
 here has been endured, experienced,
 lost and disputed ...¹²⁹

To Steiner, Goethe here is affirming the reality of the Rosicrucians, as an Order which was an historical reality, discretely functioning behind the external flow of history. He maintained that through the writings of Valentin Andrae, Europe was being deliberately informed as to the existence of the Order, and furthermore this brotherhood "had the mission of letting some esoteric influences flow in spiritual ways into the culture of central Europe".¹³⁰ Since Steiner refers to his drama, *Die Pforte*, as a "Rosicrucian mystery drama", it may be deduced that this drama is also intended to disseminate some esoteric influences into modern European culture, although overtly, and not, as previously, covertly.

In mainstream historical circles, the historicity of the Rosicrucian brotherhood is disputed, but generally it is not regarded as an historical reality. The historian Frances Yates, noted for her study

¹²⁹ *Werke, HA*, Bd. 2, 271-281, „Und wie er nun den Gipfel ganz erstiegen,/ Sieht er ein nahes, sanft geschwungnes Tal,/ Sein stilles Auge leuchtet von Vergnügen;/Denn vor dem Walde sieht er auf einmal/ in Grüner Au ein schön Gebäude liegen,/ Soeben trifft's der letzte Sonnenstrahl: Er eilt durch Wiesen, die der Tau befeuchtet,/Dem Kloster zu, das ihm entgegenleuchtet. “

...

“Du kommst hierher auf wunderbaren Pfaden“,/ spricht ihn der Alte wieder freundlich an;/Laß diese Bilder dich zu bleiben laden, Bis du erfährst, was mancher Held getan;/Was hier verborgen, ist nicht zu erraten/ Man zeige denn es dir vertraulich an;/Du ahnest wohl, wie manches hier gelitten, gelebt, verloren ward, und was erstritten./

¹³⁰ Rudolf Steiner, *Die Theosophie des Rosenkreuzers*, (Dornach: RSV, 1979), 12, „Im achtzehnten Jahrhundert hatte diese Bruderschaft die Mission auf einem spirituellen Wege etwas Esoterisches einfließen zu lassen in die Kultur Mitteleuropas ...“

of the esoteric-religious movements of Renaissance Europe, concluded that Andreae's mystical Order had no actual historical existence, but was a fantasy inspired by esoteric interests of an hermetic and alchemical nature.¹³¹ Similarly, Marie Roberts, in her detailed study of Rosicrucian influences in English literature, concluded that there was no historical basis to the Rosicrucian Order announced by Andreae. However, Roberts writes that the question is not closed, as "scholars still debate whether this clandestine brotherhood ever existed, or whether it was an elaborate hoax."¹³² Roberts also hints at the inherent difficulty in establishing the existence of a secretive organisation, when she writes that "It may seem curious to embark upon a study of a society reputed to be so secret that it was even believed to be [constituted of] invisible [persons]."¹³³

In May 1907, Steiner held a series of lectures entitled, *Die Theosophie des Rosenkreuzers* (*The Theosophy of the Rosicrucians*) in which his anthroposophical approach to theosophical themes was expounded, and in which he, in effect, simultaneously defined anthroposophy as a modern expression of the Rosicrucian movement. In this lecture cycle he described the Rosicrucian Order of earlier centuries as offering a path to spiritual development, consisting of seven distinct stages. The first stage of which was study of spiritual-esoteric themes, other stages encompassed insight into the correspondence of the microcosm (the human being) to the macrocosm (the cosmos); the seventh stages was union with God.¹³⁴ Since the "Theosophy" being taught in this lecture cycle was Steiner's own worldview, it is clear that Steiner regarded the Rosicrucian Order not only as an historical fact, but viewed his own anthroposophical worldview as an expression of this same stream, in modern times. This conclusion is confirmed in a series of lectures he held one month later, in June 1907,

¹³¹Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, (London: Routledge, 1972), 32, 44. Yates' earlier work was *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic tradition*.

¹³²Marie Roberts, *Gothic Immortals*, (London: Routledge, 1990), 2.

¹³³Roberts, *Immortals*, 2.

¹³⁴Rudolf Steiner, *Rosenkreuzers*, 158.

What does this Rosicrucian theosophy want to bring us? Knowledge of the higher worlds, that means, those realms to which the human being will still belong, when this, our physical body, has disintegrated. Knowledge of life, knowledge of the nature of death and of human development; in this way it will bring to people a re-strengthening in regard to religious truths and religious life.¹³⁵

It is significant in this regard, that one of Steiner's earliest 'theosophical' books was *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds, how is it attained?* (1904). Another predominant element in Steiner's earlier writings, is, as we noted earlier, the Platonic 'Realm of the Idea'. We have also noted that it exists as an element of Goethe's scientific works, and won the acclaim of Steiner in his editorial work in the Goethe archives. As we have seen when examining Steiner's view of cognition, he sees consciousness of this realm as an especially important achievement. In his later anthroposophical phase, this realm figures largely, indeed attainment of direct perception of it is an especial goal of Johannes, the primary character in *Die Pforte*. This realm is regarded by Steiner as a cognate with a spiritual realm known in Theosophical literature as "Devachan", a Sanskrit term. In Theosophical texts, it is in this realm that the higher ego, or triune human spirit is said to exist between incarnations on the Earth.¹³⁶

Steiner finds evidence of this realm in the literary works of Goethe, namely in his drama, *Faust*. The passage in question occurs in Part Two, where Faust is seeking to find Helen (Part 2, Act 1, lines 6239 – 6248 & 6275 – 6278). To Steiner, this passage presents Goethe's view of a lofty archetypal realm. Hence Steiner interprets

¹³⁵Rudolf Steiner, *Menschheitsentwicklung und Christus-Erkenntnis*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1967), 18, „Was will uns nun diese Rosenkreuzertheosophie bringen? Erkenntnis höherer Welten, das heißt derjenigen Welten, denen der Mensch noch angehören wird, wenn dieser und der physische Leib schon zerfallen sein wird; Erkenntnis des Lebens, Erkenntnis des Wesens des Todes und der menschlichen Entwicklung. So wird sie den Menschen eine Wiederbefestigung bringen in bezug auf religiöse Wahrheiten und religiöses Leben.“

¹³⁶*The Theosophical Glossary, Devachan*, eds. H. P. Blavatsky and G. R. S. Mead, (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1892), 91, "A state intermediate between two earth-lives, into which the Ego (Atma-Buddhi-Manas, or the Trinity made One) enters..."

this passage as an indication that Goethe was one of those rare persons who knows something of this realm, "... we can regard his description here ... as an approximate description of this realm".¹³⁷ Goethe places the mysterious figures, *The Mothers*, in this realm. Reference to *The Mothers* occurs as an esoteric theme from the ancient Greek Mysteries, about which little knowledge has been handed down from antiquity.¹³⁸

That Goethe does intend the realm of *The Mothers* to represent some kind of spiritual supra-sensible realm, is agreed to by various Faust critics, not only Steiner.¹³⁹ Faust is seeking to find the ideal archetypal self – personified as Helena. Mephistopheles tells Faust that he must venture forth into a realm which is not perceptible (initially) – and which transcends space and time,

And if you had swum through the ocean,
 and there beheld boundless space,
 You would nevertheless see wave upon wave coming,
 even though you might be afraid of going under,
 You would at least see something!
 Perhaps dolphins streaking by in the greenness of stilled seas,
 see perhaps also clouds floating past, see sun, moon and stars –
 Nothing shall you see in the eternally empty distance,
 Neither hear your own footstep, nor find
 any solid thing, whereupon you may rest!
 Descend then! I could also say – arise!
 Flee from the Created to the realm freed of structured forms!
 Be delighted amidst what long since has ceased to be!¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷Rudolf Steiner, *Über die astrale Welt und das Devachan*, (Dornach: RSV, 1999), 93, „Goethe hat dieses Land mehr äußerlich durch seinen Mephistopheles beschreiben lassen. wir können dies ... als eine annähernde Schilderung dieses Reiches ansehen.“

¹³⁸The primary reference to this theme occurs in Plutarch's *Lives*, (New York: Random House, undated) in the section, *Marcellus*, where these beings are mentioned in connection with a political crisis, 381.

¹³⁹Goethe, *HA*, Bd. 3, In the Anmerkungen, Trunz quotes various critics to this effect, 545-6.

¹⁴⁰From *Faust*, Part Two, ls. 6240-6245, 6275-78; „Und hättest du den Ozean durchschwommen, das Grenzenlose dort geschaut, So sähst du dort doch Well' auf Welle kommen, Selbst wenn es dir vorm Untergange graut. Du sähst doch etwas. Sähest wohl in der Grüne gestillter

Steiner concludes that here the expression, “what long since has ceased to be” means that all created things – or rather, the Ideas thereof – are still to be found in Devachan. In Steiner’s anthroposophical viewpoint, it is in this realm that the Ideas of the divine-spiritual beings who have brought forth creation exist, and these Ideas are supra-temporal. To Steiner, the Faustian phrase “the realm freed of shaped forms” refers to the dynamic which is operative in the Idea realm, because forms shaped from material substance or even from an energetic reality have no existence there, rather the *concept* of such forms only is to be found.¹⁴¹

In lectures delivered to Theosophists in 1904, Steiner described this realm as having seven distinct stages to it. He gave descriptions of the ‘contents’ of this realm of Ideas, in a manner which is evidently derived from what he considered to be personal perception,

In the second realm of [the archetypal Spiritual Worlds] the Universal Life, which in physical life is bound up with the forms of human, animal and plant kingdoms, and in which each being is delimited, flows like the waters of the sea. One sees this universal life flowing there ... reddish-lilac in colour, from plant form to plant form, from animal form to animal form, as if embraced in the unity of life.¹⁴²

A further element in Steiner’s worldview which is found in Goethe is the pre-existence of the soul. As a logical concomitant to

Meere streichende Delphine; sähst Wolken ziehen, Sonne, Mond und Sterne – Nichts wirst du sehn in ewig leerer Ferne, Den Schritt nicht hören, den du tust, Nichts Festes finden, wo du ruhst ... Versinke denn! Ich könnt’ auch sagen: steige! 's ist einerlei. Entfliehe dem Entstandnen in der Gebilde losgebundne Reiche! Ergetze dich am längst nicht mehr Vorhandnen; ...“

¹⁴¹Rudolf Steiner, *Wo und wie findet man den Geist?*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1961), 336.

¹⁴²Rudolf Steiner, *Vor dem Tore der Theosophie*, (Dornach: RSV, 1978), 44, „In der zweiten Region flutet das allgemeine Leben, das im physischen Leben an die Menschen-, Tier- und Pflanzenform gebunden, in jeder Wesenheit abgegrenzt ist, wie die Meereswässer dahin. Man sieht es dahinfluten, das allgemeine Leben ... rötlich-lila-farben flutet von Pflanzenform zu Pflanzenform, von Tierform zu Tierform, als in der Einheit des Lebens begriffen.“

rejecting the concept that the soul (that is, human consciousness) comes into being with, and as a corollary by-product of, the substances and nerve processes in the embryo, Steiner also strongly affirms acceptance of the idea of the pre-existence of the human soul. Although there are no similarly detailed and complex elucidations of the concept of pre-existence in Goethe as those of Steiner, in Goethe's works are various brief indications that he held that the soul pre-existed, and reincarnates. His letter about his beloved Charlotte von Stein to Christoph Martin Wieland (Weimar, April 1776) is an example. In his musing on Charlotte, Goethe indicates he felt that he had been able to remember or at least sense something of this past life;

I can only explain the significance – the power, which this woman has over me – through the [concept of] transmigration of souls – yes, we were once man and wife! Now we know of each other – veiled in the fragrance of the spirit. I have no name for us – the past – the future – the All."¹⁴³

In addition, Goethe indicated this conviction in a well known poem, sent to Charlotte, where he forthrightly declares, like Schiller, that the reason for the special bonds of love he feels between them derives from a past life,

Say, what does destiny intend for us? Say, just how did we become so finely bonded? Oh, in times now past, you were my sister or my wife, you know every element of my nature, you espy how the finest nerve of mine resounds ...¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³*Goethes Briefe*, Hamburg, ed. Erich Trunz, Vol 1, (Hamburg: Christian Wegner verlag, 1962), 212, „Ich kann mir die Bedeutsamkeit – die Macht, die diese Frau über mich hat, anders nicht erklären als durch die Seelenwanderung.– Ja, wir waren einst Mann und Weib! – Nun wissen wir von uns – verhüllt in Geisterduft. – Ich habe keine Namen für uns – die Vergangenheit – die Zukunft – das All.“

¹⁴⁴*Goethes Werke, HA*, Bd 1, 123, „Sag, was will das Schicksal uns bereiten?/Sag, wie band es uns so rein genau?/ Ach, du warst in abgelebten Zeiten/ Meine Schwester oder meine Frau; Kanntest jeden Zug in meinem Wesen, Spähtest, wie die reinste Nerve klingt ...“

In 1906, Steiner referred to these comments of Goethe about Charlotte, as indicative of Goethe's acceptance of reincarnation and karma, and then comments that Goethe had written another poem which specifically refers to reincarnation,

But the deepest which he had to say, that he said in images, among others, in the beautiful poem where he compares the soul of the human being with the water and the destiny of the human being with the wind, the soul as that which flows on its way from incarnation to incarnation in the stream of life and destiny with the wind, which lets this soul surge up and down in the continuous waves ... "The soul of the human being, how like the water you are! Fate of man, how like the wind!" This is what he says at the end of the poem, where he directly portrays the reincarnation into earthly life. "The soul of the human being is like water: it comes from heaven, it rises to heaven and must return back to the earth, eternally alternating". Goethe represents the soul in this way. It comes from the spiritual world, descends to the earth, returns back to heaven and comes again in a new incarnation ...¹⁴⁵

Goethe's habit of utilizing his literary artistic skills to represent his perspective on life was admired by Steiner, who described his own approach to representing the anthroposophical worldview as similar to this method of Goethe. In 1923, in a public lecture, Steiner referred to the holistic conclusions of Goethe's ideas as a basis for anthroposophy. He refers firstly to Goethe's scientific writings, wherein the entirety is considered, rather than a compart-

¹⁴⁵Rudolf Steiner, *Die Welträsel und die Anthroposophie*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1966), 305, „Aber das Tiefste, was er zu sagen hatte, das sagte er im Bilde, unter anderm in dem schönen Gedicht, wo er die Seele des Menschen vergleicht mit dem Wasser und das Schicksal des Menschen mit dem Winde, das diese Seele auf und ab wogen läßt in immerwährenden Wellen ... 'Seele des Menschen, wie gleichst du dem Wasser, Schicksal des Menschen wie gleichst du dem Wind', so sagt er am Schlusse des Gedichtes, wo er geradezu die Wiederverkörperung im Erdenleben darstellt. 'Des Menschen Seele gleicht dem Wasser, vom Himmel kommt es, zum Himmel steigt es, und wieder nieder zur Erde muß es, ewig wechselnd'. So stellt Goethe die Seele dar. Sie kommt aus der geistigen Welt, steigt zur Erde nieder, geht zurück zum Himmel und kommt wieder in neuer Verkörperung ..."

mentalized approach, as affirmative of his anthroposophy, and then proceeds to the artistic attitude of Goethe,

Anthroposophy takes hold of the entire human being. In this way, in yet another way, it is an expression of the Goethean worldview. It is an expression of the Goethean worldview in the first instance, in that it is stimulated by the manner and way in which Goethe observed the life of plants and animal life, in their metamorphoses, in their transformations ... But Goethe was also that personality who has built the bridge from knowledge across to art. Indeed, Goethe from his artistic convictions, has spoken the beautiful expression, 'art is a revelation of secret laws of nature, which, without this art would never become manifest' ... Such knowledge which has its roots in the life of the spirit in this way, like that of anthroposophy, streams quite naturally into artistic creativity.¹⁴⁶

Steiner sees a vastly more significant and profound expression of esoteric concepts than the above 'eternal romantic love' theme in one of Goethe's fairy tales, which has a very significant relationship to Steiner's drama, *Die Pforte*. This text is the fairy tale which Goethe simply called *Das Märchen (The Fairy Tale)*. This tale is referred to by Steiner as "The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily", a term which emphasizes the two main characters in it. To Steiner, the realm in which the fair Lily dwells, and to which the other characters are striving to ascend, is the Platonic realm of the Idea. This title of Steiner's also distinguishes the tale from other fairy tales of Goethe, such as *Melusine* and *Der neue Paris*. In this tale, Steiner sees numerous and potent allusions to the Platonic realm of

¹⁴⁶Rudolf Steiner, *Was wollte*, 39, „Anthroposophie ergreift eben den ganzen Menschen. Dadurch wird sie noch in einer anderen Beziehung ein Ausdruck der Goetheschen Weltanschauung. Sie ist zunächst ein Ausdruck der Goetheschen Weltanschauung, indem sie angeregt worden ist durch die Art und Weise, wie Goethe das Pflanzenleben, das Tierleben betrachtete in seinen Metamorphosen, in seinen Verwandlungen ... Aber Goethe war auch diejenige Persönlichkeit, welche die Brücke hinübergebaut hat von dem Erkennen zur Kunst. Goethe hat ja aus seiner künstlerischen Überzeugung heraus das schöne Wort gesprochen, „Die Kunst ist eine Offenbarung geheimer Naturgesetze, die ohne diese Kunst niemals offenbar würden ... Solche Erkenntnis, die so im Leben des Geistes wurzelt, wie die Anthroposophie, die strömt von selbst auch in das künstlerische Schaffen ein.“

the Idea, or Devachan, as well as to the pathway to conscious perception of the divine.

1B4: Goethe's fairy tale provides the thematic basis of *Die Pforte*

Das Märchen was written in 1795, it was incorporated into a longer work, a collection of tales, *Unterhaltungen Deutscher Ausgewanderten* (*Conversations between German emigrants*). The tale gripped the imagination of people throughout Europe, as Mommsen testifies.¹⁴⁷ People clamoured for Goethe to write an explanation, but this never happened. Readers felt that he had drawn on the mystical perspectives which fascinated him throughout his life. Steiner regards the overall imaginative perspective underlying Goethe's *Das Märchen* as very closely linked to that given in his own anthroposophical (theosophical) texts. Indeed Steiner regards Goethe as, in effect, a theosophist,

You just cannot understand entire areas of Goethe's writings, if you don't have some idea of Theosophy. In a broader sense, Goethe's achievements in regard to the plant world can only be understood by those who have a feeling for what Goethe called the life-processes or the metamorphoses of plants.¹⁴⁸

In a public lecture Steiner describes this Goethean tale as an especially theosophical, artistic presentation of the processes involved in spiritual development,

That Goethe was a Theosophist is clear from his 'hidden' writing, which is indeed included in every edition of his works, but which is the least read – from his fairy tale of "The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily". This contains all of Theosophy, but in the way in which theosophical truths have been communicated, since time immemorial. Only since the founding of the Theosophical Society have these truths been communicated; earlier they could only be presented in a pictorial

¹⁴⁷Katharina Mommsen, *Goethe Märchen*, (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1984), 195, „ ... die erste Reaktion des Publikums war eine Mischung von echter Bewunderung, respektvoller Ratlosigkeit und – Neugier.“

¹⁴⁸Rudolf Steiner, *Ursprung*, 62, „Sie können schon ganze bestimmte Gebiete bei Goethe nicht verstehen, wenn Sie nicht eine Ahnung haben von Theosophie. Goethes Ausführungen über die Pflanzenwelt versteht nur derjenige, welcher eine Ahnung davon hat, was Goethe die Lebensvorgänge oder die Metamorphose der Pflanzen nennt.“

form. *The Fairy Tale* is one such pictorial expression of theosophical truths.¹⁴⁹

Steiner maintains in his comments on this fairy tale, that it speaks to its readers of the path to esoteric spiritual development, using images drawn from the spiritual heritage of Europe. In his commentary on Goethe's *Unterhaltungen Deutscher Ausgewanderten*, Trunz quotes Rudolf Steiner for his interpretation of *Das Märchen*; cf. HA6, 613, among a range of other interpretations.¹⁵⁰ Steiner understands this fairy tale to depict the process of esoteric-spiritual development, or initiation, in remarkably insightful and accurate detail. It is this same process which he depicts in his drama, *Die Pforte*, and which we shall consider in detail in the following sections. In *Die Pforte*, Steiner attempts to depict the spiritual development process in human terms, and hence the characters are almost entirely personalities, not allegorical figures.

By contrast, Mommsen for example, views the tale as a Utopian description of the yearning of the artist to change the world for the better, because of the 'happy ending' – wherein the Youth and the Lily unite to each other. She reaches this conclusion that it has to be a Utopian ideal, because nowhere could such a blissful reality exist on Earth.¹⁵¹ While Mommsen's view has some merits, it appears to ignore, among other things, the specific placement by Goethe of *Das Märchen* in the *Unterhaltungen*, a collection of mainly supernatural tales. Steiner's view is to the contrary, he places it firmly in Goethe's esoteric context. He may have been influenced also by a letter of Goethe's in which Goethe's interest in esoteric material

¹⁴⁹Rudolf Steiner, *Ursprung*, 62, „Daß Goethe Theosoph war, geht aus einer „verborgenen“ Schrift hervor, die zwar in jeder Ausgabe vorhanden ist, jedoch von den wenigsten gelesen wird; aus dem „Märchen von der grünen Schlange und der schönen Lilie“. Das enthält die ganze Theosophie, aber so, wie von jeher die theosophischen Wahrheiten mitgeteilt worden sind. Erst seit der Begründung der Theosophischen Gesellschaft sind dies äußerlich zum Ausdruck gekommen; früher konnten sie nur bildlich dargestellt werden.“

¹⁵⁰Trunz, HA, Bd. 6, *Anmerkungen*, 613.

¹⁵¹Mommsen, *Goethe*, 201, „Auf diese Happy-End-Lösung hin ist das gesamte Märchen angelegt ... Da Zustände dieser Art in Wirklichkeit niemals existieren können ... Was Dichter und Philosophen so oft erträumten, eine utopische Veränderung der Welt ...“

(alchemical, Rosicrucian) is evinced. Written on 28. June 1876, to Charlotte von Stein, Goethe states that he has read the central Rosicrucian source text, *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosencreutz*, and that “there is a lovely Märchen in it, once it is re-born“ in a new form. This letter is not included in the Hamburger edition of Goethe’s works, but it is included in the Weimarer edition of Goethe’s works.¹⁵²

Certainly to Steiner, the ‘Utopian’ element in this tale is not Utopian, but realistic, in so far as it portrays the blessed state able to be experienced by the successful attainment of high spiritual development, “the fair Lily, the ideal of perfect knowledge and perfect life and creativity ... In the fairy tale, Goethe depicts in the Youth, the person striving for the highest bride, and that with which he should be united, is called the ‘fair Lily’.”¹⁵³

Steiner’s drama, *Die Pforte*, is specifically written as a parallel work to Goethe’s *Märchen*. In the preliminary drafts of *Die Pforte*, published posthumously by the administration of the Steiner archives, the characters in this drama – in the first scene – actually bear the names of the characters in the fairy tale.¹⁵⁴ Because of the close parallel of *Das Märchen* to Steiner’s first drama, an additional supplementary volume to Steiner’s *Complete Works* was published, containing his twelve lectures on the tale. Some of the characteristics of characters of *Die Pforte*, and the events which befall them, can only be meaningfully interpreted through knowledge of the fact that there is a direct parallel between this drama and the Goethean fairy tale. We will now consider briefly the major dynamics of the Goethean fairytale.

¹⁵²*Goethes Werke*, Weimarer Ausgabe, Bd. 7, *Goethes Briefe*, (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Verlag, 1891), 233, „Christian Rosenkreutz Hochzeit habe ich hinausgelesen, es giebt ein schön Märchen zur Stunde zu erzählen, wenn es wiedergebohren wird ...“

¹⁵³Rudolf Steiner, *Wo und wie findet man den Geist?* 73, „... die schöne Lilie, das Ideal vollkommener Erkenntnis und vollkommenen Lebens und Schaffens“ and, 83, „Goethe zeigt in dem Märchen den nach der höchsten Braut strebenden Menschen in seinem Jüngling, und das, womit er vereint werden soll, nennt er die schöne Lilie.“

¹⁵⁴Rudolf Steiner, *Entwürfe, Fragmente, und Paralipomena zu den vier Mysteriendramen*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1969), 63.

The opening scene of the fairytale is a little hut on the bank of a mysterious river that effectively divides two realms. In the hut dwells the Ferryman, who alone is empowered to ferry various beings across the waters. Then two strange creatures, Will-o'-the-Wisps, appear and importune the Ferryman to row them across the river immediately. This he does, and demands that his fare be paid not with pieces of gold which the Will-o'-the-Wisps so easily shake from themselves, but with *the fruits of the Earth*. Their gold pieces are to him most unwelcome, indeed he says they would enrage the river should they fall into it. The Will-o'-the-Wisps are completely disinterested in all his concerns, and set off from him, but the Ferryman holds them fast with magical power until they agree to meet his demands at some later time. He takes the gold and throws it into a cleft in the rocks. The gold pieces tumble down into a cave, where we see the Green Snake slumbering; she is awakened by their clinking noise, and immediately begins to greedily eat them. As she does so, she begins to develop a luminous glow. She sets forth to discover the source of gold, and encounters the Will-o'-the-Wisps.

A dialogue ensues, and the Will-o'-the-Wisps reveal they are in search of the renowned beautiful Lily. The Lily is beautiful beyond compare, and loved by all who know her, and yet she is lonely, and to some extent, despondent. The way to the Lily is an arduous path, and her touch is death to all living creatures. The Green Snake informs the Will-o'-the-Wisps that her realm is remote, and that it is situated on the *other side* of the river; she dwells there, wistfully yearning for the fulfilment of a mysterious event. The Will-o'-the-Wisps are told that the Ferryman cannot take anyone back across the river, he can only bring them to this side. However the Green Snake reveals there are two ways in which one can cross back to the other realm; one is via the snake, but only at midday when she forms an arch across the river. The second way is via an ominous giant, this opportunity opens only at twilight and dusk, when the sun is either just setting or just rising; on the back of his moving shadow one can be carried across the river.

The group part company and we follow the Green Snake back into her cave, where she intends to explore a mysterious grotto, with the help of the luminosity now emanating from her inner being. She had previously sensed the presence of four mysterious

statues there, but now, radiant, she beholds a great underground temple where statues of four enthroned kings are clearly visible. Three of these are noble in appearance and are made from precious metals, but the fourth king has a malignant, disharmonious appearance. This encounter has startling consequences, the statues come to life and the kings, like hierophants in an ancient mystery ritual, begin a gripping dialogue with the Green Snake. Though brief, the dialogue is immensely tantalising through its mystical, cryptic allusions. The entire scene is raised to dramatic heights when we witness the Man with the Lamp emerging from the solid rock walls and joining in the dialogue, bringing it to an end with a loud cry, 'The time is at hand!' After this powerful musical tones reverberate through the temple, followed by the exiting of the Green Snake and the Man with the Lamp through the solid rock walls.

The scene now moves to the cottage of the Old Man and his wife, who is in great distress. Will-o'-the-Wisps, she recounts, had visited her and consumed all the pure gold veneer used in the cottage. Furthermore she had to promise the Wisps that she would repay the debt to the Ferryman. The scene then changes to the journey of the Old Woman, setting out for the hut of the Ferryman on the bank of the river, with fruits of the Earth (three cabbages, three onions, three artichokes). But on the way she stumbles across the giant who steals one third of her precious cargo; so the Ferryman does not accept it now, but requires her to make a pledge to the river.

At this point another passenger disembarks from the boat of the Ferryman, the forlorn Youth, consumed with a yearning to encounter his beloved, the beautiful Lily. He meets the Old Woman with the cargo and sets out together with her to find the Lily. At midday they see the arch of the green snake crossing the river, and they hurry across, together with the Wisps. In the meantime a hawk, belonging to the Prince, has killed a canary belonging to the Lily; whom we now see singing a plaintive song, full of sadness, waiting for the time when a great temple shall rise up from inside the Earth, and when she shall meet her true love. She has three maids-in-waiting attending her. The Youth, seeing her, rushes forward knowing full well the consequences, and touching her, falls at her feet, apparently dead. At this point the Green Snake forms a magic circle

around the Youth, whilst the Old Man with the Lamp is invoked by the Lily.

The Green Snake prepares to sacrifice herself, for she seems to know that she holds the key to redeem the situation. Then a remarkable procession scene begins, in which all the characters in the fairytale move into the subterranean temple of kings. A dramatic scene follows in which the temple shudders and then begins to ascend up through the crust of the Earth to its surface. The fourth king now collapses and the three great kings carry out a ritual for the Youth, who comes partly to life, and who then is led by the Old Man with the Lamp to the waiting fair Lily. Now that he is spiritually reborn, these two may unite, and in so doing the Youth is restored to his full faculties and these two now commence to reign over their kingdom. In the meantime a bridge over the river has been formed from exquisite gemstones which is what is all that is left of the green snake.

The Giant briefly appears on the bridge but is soon turned into a harmless lifeless object. The Green Snake has provided a permanent and wholesome way for all people to cross over the barrier between the two realms. Steiner's drama, *Die Pforte*, is a dramatization of the Goethean tale, keeping a close parallelism with the tale, except where notable exceptions are made. Steiner views this fairy tale as an allegorical portrayal of the quest for higher consciousness. The correspondence between the list of characters in both works, as noted by Steiner, is as follows,¹⁵⁵

Lilie (Lily)	- Maria
Mensch (Youth)	- Johannes Thomasius
1. Irrlicht (Will-o'-the-Wisp)	- Capesius
2. Irrlicht (Will-o'-the-Wisp)	- Strader
Der Mann mit der Lampe (the Old Man with the Lamp)	- Felix Balde
König des Willens (king, of the will)	- Romanus
König des Gefühls (king, of the emotions)	- Theodosius
König des Denkens (king, of the intelligence)	- Benedictus
1. Mädchen (1 st maiden)	- Philia
2. Mädchen (2 nd maiden)	- Astrid
3. Mädchen (3 rd maiden)	- Luna

¹⁵⁵Rudolf Steiner, *Entwürfe*, 12.

Riese (Giant)	- German (Gairman)
Kanarienvogel (Canary)	- Kind (child)
Fährmann (Ferryman)	- Der Geist der Elemente (Spirit of the Elements)
Gemischter König (the mixed king)	- Retardus
Die grüne Schlange (the Green Snake)	- Die andere Maria (the Other Maria)
Die Alte Frau (the Old Woman)	- Felicia Balde
Der Habicht (the Hawk)	- Theodora

With regard to the names of the characters in *Die Pforte*, Steiner commented in a lecture delivered two months after the first performance of *Die Pforte*, "With all the names it is the case, that they are coined for the individual beings specifically according to their nature."¹⁵⁶ In addition, in the list of characters for *Die Pforte* Steiner gives a key as to what each of them represents.

The allegorical meaning embedded in the name of each character will be considered in Section 2B, where a brief overview of each scene is made. The following synopsis of Steiner's view of *Das Märchen* is drawn from *Goethes geheime Offenbarung*, the volume of collected Steiner lectures on this tale, mentioned above.¹⁵⁷ The River is seen to be the barrier which divides the mundane world from the realm of the spirit (the Lily). Although a river is often used poetically to symbolize time and change and constancy, Steiner's view of the river as the boundary between the physical reality and the Other World – where the Unborn, and also the Dead exist – is consistent with his interpretation of the Goethean tale, and bears strong similarities to ancient Greek mythology.

In this mythology, a river is also the boundary between the living and the Dead, and the aged ferryman, Charon, plies his boat between the two realms.¹⁵⁸ The river is a kind of elemental realm, an

¹⁵⁶Rudolf Steiner, 17th Sept 1910, *Über Selbsterkenntnis, anknüpfend an das Rosenkreuzermysterium „Die Pforte der Einweihung“*, in *Wege und Ziele des geistigen Menschen*, (Dornach: RSV, 1973), 114, „Alle Namen sind so, daß sie für die einzelnen Wesenheiten ganz wesenhaft geprägt sind.“

¹⁵⁷Rudolf Steiner, *Goethes geheime Offenbarung*, (Dornach: RSV, 1982).

¹⁵⁸*The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. N. G. L. Hammond, 2nd ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 228.

intermediary realm between the material world and spiritual realms, in which the human being is to be found, prior to birth, or more correctly, prior to conception. The main intentions of the Youth, the Will-o'-the-Wisps and the Old Woman, is to cross the barrier between this physical world and enter a higher, spiritual state.

To Steiner, therefore, the initial scene of this tale is in the realm of the soul, where souls, in the pre-conception stage, are waiting to incarnate. The two Will-o'-the-Wisps are urgently importuning a type of Charon, an aged ferryman, to take them across the river, in this sense the ferryman is the reverse of Charon, who takes the soul up into the other worlds, as he only takes souls down into the earthly world. The Will-o'-the-Wisps represent in Steiner's model the ego-centric, earthwards-bound impulses in human souls, driving them to enter into earthly life.

Steiner refers to the realm of the unborn as the 'soul world' or 'astral world', a realm which is intermediary to that of the 'spiritual realm'. In his lectures to Theosophists, he maintained that the true spiritual realm referred to in Theosophical literature as 'Devachan' is cognate with the Christian 'Heaven', and also with the realm of the 'Idea'. His conclusions derive in this instance from his 'spiritual research'. When Goethe's tale is viewed in this way, a key Steiner concept, pre-existence of the soul, is affirmed. As we have noted earlier, in the higher realm, beyond the soul world, exist the Ideas which govern and create the physical world and its objects. An element in Steiner's view of reincarnation is that as the soul returns to a new life, and is firmly clothed in a physical body at birth, it nevertheless retains a semi-conscious awareness of its original spiritual condition. The result of this faint memory is the yearning to re-achieve this primal condition. This perspective of Steiner's is even to be found in his *Credo*, which he wrote as a twenty-seven year old,

The human being however feels and knows itself to be a separate individual, when it awakens to its full consciousness [entering adulthood]. But at the same time, he has implanted with himself, the yearning for the Idea. This yearning drives him on, to overcome the separateness, and to allow the spirit in himself to come to life, to be like

unto the spirit ... the human being must will to do that which the spirit, the Idea in him wills.¹⁵⁹

This same concept is elaborated in various of his lectures, and he presented meditative verses to his students, encapsulating this concept. The first of the following examples was inscribed into a student's copy of his book, *Knowledge of Higher Worlds; how is it attained?*,

Why does the seeking soul of the human being strive for knowledge of the higher worlds? Because every look into the sense-world, born of the soul, becomes a question, full of yearning for the being of the spirit. Why does the human soul, following a dim yearning, strive towards self-knowledge? Because the Being of the world is not comprehensible through glitter of Ideas and not in the entanglement of concepts. It lies within the human self; once this is unveiled, then the evolving being of the cosmos is unveiled.¹⁶⁰

To Steiner therefore, what could be characterized as ego-centric, earthwards bound, instinctive impulses in human souls, driving people to enter into incarnation, is not the sole impulse in the incarnating person. There are also the higher impulses, in which this memory of the divine is preserved – these exist in the realm of the Idea. It is these memories which impel the soul, once it is incarnate, to seek for spiritual development. The search for the realm of the beautiful Lily by various characters in Goethe's tale

¹⁵⁹Rudolf Steiner, *Wahrspruchworte*, 273, „Der Mensch aber fühlt und erkennt als Einzelnes sich, wenn er zu seinem vollen Bewußtsein erwacht. Dabei aber hat er die Sehnsucht nach der Idee eingepflanzt. Diese Sehnsucht treibt ihn an, die Einzelheit zu überwinden und den Geist in sich aufleben zu lassen, dem Geiste gemäß zu leben ... der Mensch muß ... was wollen, was der Geist, die Idee in ihm will.“

¹⁶⁰Rudolf Steiner, *Wahrspruch*, 231 and 235, „Warum strebt des Menschen suchende Seele nach Erkenntnis der höheren Welten? Weil jeder seeleentsprossene Blick in die Sinneswelt zur sehnsuchtvollen Frage wird nach dem Geistessein.“ (orthographics/syntax in original)
„Warum strebt, dunkler Sehnsucht folgend: nach Selbst-Erkenntnis des Menschen Seele? Weil nicht im Ideen-Schein und nicht in Begriff-Gewebe der Welten Wesen faßbar. Es liegt im Menschen-Selbst; enthüllt sich dieses: so enthüllt sich der Welten Werdewesen.“

therefore is seen by Steiner as depicting the urge of various aspects of the human consciousness for perception of the realm of Ideas, a process which implies spiritual development.

An early episode in the Goethean tale is that of the two Will-o'-the-Wisps being encountered by the Green Snake, who has been eating pieces of gold which come from these two strange beings. They are disconcerted at the fact that the Ferryman insists that they must repay a debt to him, and to do this they are in search of the fair Lily. To Steiner, this dynamic indicates that the everyday imperfect 'self' does produce the gold of enlightenment, but does not know how to use it, and is not able to find the way to spirituality. The quality in the personality however, which selflessly engages with life, and learns from life experiences can become illumined through this. These two beings are unsatisfied with the guidance provided by the Green Snake and proceed on their way without her. The tale recounts that they then enter into the house of the Old Woman (the core values of the soul) and eat the gold that lines the hearth, leaving her distraught. But the tale's narrator recounts that before they leave her home, the Old Woman has promised her two strange visitors that she shall repay their debt.

In Steiner's model, the two negative aspects of the soul, the Will-o'-the-Wisps, the unedified emotive and intellectual tendencies, are as yet unaware that they need to journey with selflessness, and hence they shall indeed incur a debt to the spiritual powers who created humanity. They bring about a loss by causing attrition of the residual wisdom and religious impulses from earlier times, through their modern, humanistic materialism. The Old Woman sets out to repair the damage or repay the debt, taking the demanded three fruits of the Earth, but she encounters the Giant, who robs her of some of these. To Steiner, this episode means that the soul's core values attempt to repair the damage of the materialistic mental qualities, by 'harvesting' some valuable outcomes of life experience. But the soul cannot avoid losing some of this to retrograde atavistic impulses, which undermine the self's integrity.

Meanwhile, the Green Snake, now somewhat luminescent, encounters the three kings. Steiner views the three kings as representatives of specific triune spiritual faculties dormant within the human being. In this interpretation of the three kings episode by Steiner, the reason that the Green Snake, once she has consumed

some gold, can see them, is that there is now sufficient insightfulness in the personality, the everyday ego, to enable it to more directly sense the existence of the triune spiritual potential, even if these are still immersed under layers of un-illuminated soul qualities. Thus the dialogue of the Green Snake with the three Kings becomes a dialogue between the self, in which the urge for spirituality is developing, and the higher self.

The rest of the tale, from Steiner's viewpoint, recounts the processes wherein the self undergoes initiatory spiritual renewal, learning how to dialogue with the triune spiritual potential, and harmonize its will with its triune soul qualities (the three maidens). Further, the self must learn to not cause harm to its own higher possibilities by premature and ego-centric spiritual questing (the hawk frightening the Lily's canary). Eventually the Youth shall succeed in his quest, and restore harmony to the human being overall, and the spiritual realms which interface with it. But all of this only occurs because the Green Snake provides a selfless, humble element, offering advice, seeking to become illumined, etc.

Her actions culminate towards the end of the tale, in a crucial episode, which enables the Youth and the Lily to unite; she sacrifices herself by forming herself into a ring, by taking her tail into her mouth, and this results in the creation of a resplendent, jewelled bridge across the river. Prior to this, the snake forms itself into a ring by grasping its tail, is a common symbol in esoteric Hellenistic literature, where it is known as a symbol of eternity or eternal consciousness.¹⁶¹ Steiner's interpretation of the specific incident where she forms a ring, will be considered in Section 3 of this study.

After this event the Green Snake's actions culminate in the process of forming a link between the spiritual and the earthly realities, which is in effect, the jewel-like fundament of the new personality, which can cross the barrier, the river, between the mundane and the spiritual realms, as Goethe describes it, "a broad and stately bridge stretching with many arches across the river". To Steiner, therefore the Green Snake represents the inherent tendency towards selflessness, a potential that becomes actual when the

¹⁶¹Charles William King, *The Gnostics and their remains*, reprint of the 1887 2nd ed., (San Diego: Wizards bookshelf, 1982), 437.

crucial moment calls for this, "The snake, the selfless life-experience – developed in love of wisdom, through experiential wisdom – surrenders its existence, to build a bridge between the sensuality and spirituality."¹⁶² To Steiner, the character of the Green Snake is Goethe's way of representing the fact that selflessness and humility are to become a firm reality in the personality seeking spiritual development.

An alternative interpretation of the Green Snake forming a bridge, is given by Mommsen, who interprets the entire tale as a work alluding to the role of art in culture, and the influence of Schiller in Goethe's inner life. She does not consider that the snake represents the above Hellenistic esoteric motif, because of a passage about the snake symbol in a letter written by Goethe, in which he declares he sees the symbol differently. Goethe wrote as follows on 5th January 1814,

One uses the snake which made itself into a circle, as a symbol of eternity; I however gladly regard it as an allegory of a happy temporality. What more can a person wish for than it be granted him, to connect the end to the beginning, so in what other way can this occur, than through the lasting nature of affection, of trust, of love, of friendship."¹⁶³

Mommsen concludes that "this shows how the snake symbol is to be interpreted in the Märchen also; as a symbol of friendship ... it was his friendship with Schiller which Goethe portrayed in the form of an enigmatic image."¹⁶⁴ However, Goethe here is referring to the

¹⁶²Rudolf Steiner, *Goethes Geistesart*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1956) 77, „Die Schlange, die selbstlose, in Liebe zur Weisheit, in erlebter Weisheit entwickelte Lebenserfahrung, gibt ihre Existenz auf, um eine Brücke zu bilden zwischen der Sinnlichkeit und der Geistigkeit.“

¹⁶³Mommsen, *Goethe*, 222, „Man bedient sich als Symbol der Ewigkeit der Schlange, die sich in einen Reif abschließt, ich betrachte dies hingegen gern als ein Gleichnis einer glücklichen Zeitlichkeit. Was kann der Mensch mehr wünschen, als daß ihm erlaubt sei, das Ende an den Anfang anzuschließen, und wodurch kann dies geschehen, als durch die Dauer der Zuneigung, des Vertrauens, der Liebe, der Freundschaft.“

¹⁶⁴Mommsens, *Goethe*, 222, „Es ergibt sich, wie auch im Märchen das Schlangengleichnis zu deuten ist: als Freundschaftssymbol ... es war

Gnostic image of a snake with its tail in its mouth, only, not a snake in general. However, the Green Snake acts as a crucial catalyst to the rising action of the tale in various ways, whilst in its normal state, forming itself into ring is not required for these. For example, when it whispers to the Old Man with the Lamp during the dialogue with the three Kings, a very dramatic event ensues, which we noted earlier, namely the Old Man declares that 'the time is at hand', and the characters hurtle away through the earth. Further, the dialogue itself only arises because the Green Snake consumes the gold pieces cast off by the Will-o'-the-Wisps. Hence Mommsen's conclusion ignores various other, important actions of the Green Snake, she has no comments on how to assimilate these episodes into her model.

These episodes could be seen as susceptible to Steiner's perspective, in which they do correlate to specific initiatory processes; we have just noted that the becoming luminous of the Green Snake is seen as the soul developing wisdom. Whereas, the expression, 'the time is at hand', in the Steiner model, refers to the incipient preparedness of the self to jettison the lower egocentric tendencies. Without this preparedness, the union of the Youth to the fair Lily is impossible. In a public lecture from 1908 Steiner describes the nature of the Green Snake in terms of his earlier philosophical writings, including the ethical nuance mentioned above, but now extending it to integrate his epistemological conclusions. He refers back to the Goethean *Urpflanze*,

Think about what Goethe does with the concept of the primal plant ... he takes the concept, proceeds to the plant and sees how it shapes itself into this or that form, how it assumes entirely different forms in lower or higher regions and so on. Then step by step, he follows how the spiritual reality creeps into every shape existing in the sense world. He himself creeps around like the Green Snake in the crevasses of the earth. Thus for Goethe the concept world is nothing else than that which lets itself be woven into the fabric of objective reality. The snake is to him a representative of that soul-power which does not strive egoistically upwards into higher realms of existence, wanting to be raised above everything, rather it is that soul-power which patiently lets

seine Freundschaft mit Schiller, die Goethe in Form eines Bilderrätsels darstellte.“

the concept be shown to be correct through observation, which patiently goes from experience to experience, from event to event.¹⁶⁵

The above remarks of Steiner demonstrate his view of *Das Märchen* as an esoteric text, in which also the primal and quint-essential epistemological act – in Steiner’s view – uniting the perceived with the Idea thereof – is embodied in the figure of the Green Snake. Thus this fairy tale of the Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily becomes, in Steiner’s eyes, an exposition of esoteric spiritual development in the wider European theosophical tradition. This kinship of Goethe’s *Märchen* with Steiner’s anthroposophical phase is remarkably relevant to Steiner’s own life. In particular it is relevant to his taking up a new career path as a teacher of spiritual subjects, and leaving behind the academic, philosophical work. We noted in the Introduction (1a) that the opportunity for Steiner’s new career path of elucidating spiritual themes came in 1902, when he tentatively started lecturing, and was consequently approached by theosophists. That is, he was invited to join the Theosophical Society as a General Secretary, after giving lectures to a Giordano Bruno Association in Berlin.

Steiner reports in his autobiography that it was in fact his lecture elucidating the esoteric meaning of Goethe’s *Märchen*, which he terms, *The fairy tale of The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily*, which resulted in the invitation from the theosophists. As he comments in his autobiography,

¹⁶⁵Rudolf Steiner, *Wo und wie findet man*, 71, „Denken sie sich aber, was Goethe mit dem Begriff der Urpflanze tut ... Er nimmt den Begriff, geht von ihm aus zur Pflanze über und sieht, wie sie sich in dieser oder jener Form ausgestaltet, wie sie ganz andere Formen annimmt in niederer oder höherer Gegend und so weiter. Nun verfolgt er von Stufe zu Stufe, wie die geistige Realität oder Gestalt in jede sinnliche Gestalt hineinkriecht. Er selbst kriecht da herum wie die (grüne) Schlange in den Klüften der Erde. So ist für Goethe die Begriffswelt nichts anderes als das, was sich in die objektive Wirklichkeit hineinspinnen läßt. Die Schlange ist ihm der Repräsentant der Seelenkraft, die nicht in egoistischer Weise hinaufstrebt zu den höheren Gebieten des Daseins und sich über alles zu erheben versucht, sondern die geduldig den Begriff durch die Beobachtung fortwährend bewahrheiten läßt, die geduldig von Erfahrung zu Erfahrung, von Erlebnis zu Erlebnis geht.“

It was an important experience for me to be able to speak in words which were moulded from out of the spiritual world, whereas previously I was compelled, owing to the circumstances in my time in Berlin, to only allow the spiritual to shine through my presentations.¹⁶⁶

In Section 1B4, we noted the parallelism between the *Die Pforte* and *Das Märchen*, it became clear that the characters of Steiner's drama are representative of those in the fairy tale. We noted then, to Steiner the primary intention of Goethe's fairy tale is to communicate the process by which the barrier between earthly consciousness and the spiritualized state is overcome and spirituality is attained. As Steiner explains in lectures on his drama, in *Die Pforte* he utilizes the dynamics and allegorical elements of *Das Märchen* to describe the processes and challenges which a contemporary acolyte on the spiritual path has to encounter, in order to achieve initiation or esoteric spirituality in his sense of the phrase. Most of the characters in *Die Pforte* are representatives of those in Goethe's tale.

The three women in *Die Pforte*, Philia, Astrid and Luna, represent the three maidens serving the fair Lily; as such, they are understood by Steiner to portray the thinking (Astrid), emotion (Philia) and will (Luna). The other set of characters in the Goethean tale, portraying triune dynamics are the three Kings – the gold, silver and brass kings. These are represented in *Die Pforte* by the three hierophants, Benedictus, Theodosius and Romanus. In his list of characters, Steiner notes that these three characters represent the higher self, he views the higher self as a triune entity. There is also a fourth, negative, king that falls away in the course of the fairy tale, just as does the fourth hierophant, Retardus in *Die Pforte*, this character is a negative hierophant. The Youth is seen striving somewhat blindly toward the goal (the fair Lily); he can thus be seen as representing the normal self, and this is represented by Johannes Thomasius in *Die Pforte*.

¹⁶⁶Rudolf Steiner, *Lebensgang*, 276; „Es war ein wichtiges Erlebnis für mich, in Worten, die aus der Geistwelt heraus geprägt waren, sprechen zu können, nachdem ich bisher in meiner Berliner Zeit durch die Verhältnisse gezwungen war, das Geistige nur durch meine Darstellungen durchleuchten zu lassen.“

The Old Man with the Lamp is Felix Balde in *Die Pforte*, he is an aspect of the human spirit, active as a spiritual advisor to the soul. His wife, Felicia, the 'Old Woman' of the Goethean tale, represents the attitudes and feelings which are normal and decent in 'everyman'. The two Will-o'-the-Wisps are represented by the historian Capesius and the technician, Strader. It is clear from Steiner's commentaries on the Goethean tale, and his description of the characters in *Die Pforte*, that he views many of the characters as aspects of the one entity, the normal human being. Similarly, in *Die Pforte*, many of the characters are aspects of Johannes, or embody specific qualities which are of particularly relevant to Johannes's quest.

In terms of the goal of the spiritual quest, this is portrayed by the fair Lily in Goethe's tale; she is represented by the character, Maria, in *Die Pforte*. Steiner's comments on the nature of the Lily reveal his view of the goal of spiritual initiation and hence his intention in creating the personality traits in the character, Maria. With regard to the quest for spiritual development in *Das Märchen*, in one of his lectures on this tale, Steiner comments,

The highest [condition] towards which the human being can strive, the highest into which the human being is able to transform, was denoted by Goethe with the symbol of the Lily. This is cognate with what we call the highest wisdom ...¹⁶⁷

This view of Steiner's can be assimilated to some extent to the recognized meanings of the lily symbol in so far as it is usually understood to refer to purity, peace, a virgin goddess, virginity, the blessed Virgin Mary. Steiner is evidently associating the highest wisdom with the classical 'divine feminine', and this in turn is equated with the various symbolic usages of the lily.

Steiner continues, commenting that the term, 'lily' was used in the Mysteries to denote "that highest condition of consciousness where the human being is permitted to be free, because he will never misuse his freedom ... because the human being has been

¹⁶⁷Rudolf Steiner, *Goethe's geheime*, 152, „Das Höchste, was der Mensch anstreben kann, das Höchste, in was sich der Mensch verwandeln sollte, das bezeichnet Goethe mit dem Symbolum der Lilie. Es ist gleichbedeutend mit dem, was wir die höchste Weisheit nennen.“

purified, transformed". That Steiner does see the lily in these terms, and hence the 'fair Lily' of the Goethean tale, is clear from a lecture on *Das Märchen*, in which he refers to the 'Chorus Mysticus' in *Faust*, Part Two,

So we see that Goethe expresses his deepest affirmation of life's meaning precisely there ... where he brings his great affirmative poem to a conclusion ... after he has made his way through to union with the fair Lily, to that condition which finds its expression in the passage mentioned in the Chorus Mysticus, which expresses the same as what Goethe's philosophy and Spiritual Science and *Das Märchen* says, "... Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan!" (The eternal-feminine draws us onwards!).¹⁶⁸

As we have noted earlier, to Steiner the fundamental message of the Goethean tale is that there is a way to achieve union with the divine, by crossing over a barrier to this spiritualized state, for there exists a yearning to cross over this barrier. In *Die Pforte* Steiner explores the processes and challenges which a contemporary acolyte on the spiritual path has to encounter, in order to achieve initiation or esoteric spirituality in his sense of the phrase. Before proceeding to consider the scenes of *The Portal of Initiation*, it is necessary here to consider what Steiner meant by the term *Initiation*.

His term for initiation in German is 'Einweihung', which means in effect, to be inducted into a state of consecration (Weihe), an action which is traditionally associated with religious practise. In Christian usage, consecration traditionally means to be set apart from the mundane in order to be a vessel for a source of holiness, which is understood to derive from God or Christ.¹⁶⁹ In distinction,

¹⁶⁸Rudolf Steiner, *Goethes geheime Offenbarung*, 77, „So sehen wir, daß Goethe geradezu sein tiefstes Bekenntnis ... da ausspricht, wo er sein großes Bekenntnisgedicht zum Abschluß bringt, nachdem er emporgedrungen ist bis zur Vereinigung mit der schönen Lilie, bis zu dem Zustande, der seinen Ausdruck findet in der erwähnten Stelle des Chorus mysticus, die dasselbe ausdrückt, was Goethes Philosophie und Geisteswissenschaft und was auch das „Märchen“ sagt: ... 'Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan'!“

¹⁶⁹J. D. Douglas, ed. *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, "Consecration", (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1974), 254.

the term, 'Initiation', which is also used in German, refers more generally to the ceremony of admission into society, such as a "religious ceremony in a tribe or clan to signify the coming of age or puberty of its members."¹⁷⁰

From Steiner's comments on this subject it is clear that he regards the term 'Initiation' as very closely allied to the term 'consecration', although he does give some extended nuances to its meaning. Passages in his teachings about the meaning of initiation often include an exposition based on the famous maxim in the ancient Grecian mystery centre at Delphi, "Know thyself!" to which Steiner repeatedly drew attention in his lectures. Steiner understands this maxim to mean that after initiation a person is now able to have a conscious interaction with the divine, in effect, he gains 'knowledge'. The divine constitutes another part, a second part, of human nature to which initiation grants access, as he maintained in a lecture on the Gospel of St. John,

... and so it becomes a reality for those who follow the indications of the spiritual researcher and say to themselves, the ego of which I had known up to now, shares in the entire external world, it is transient like the external world. But in me there slumbers a second ego, of which people are not aware, but of which they can become aware, and which is united with the non-transitory, just as the first ego is united with the transient and temporal. And with [spiritual] re-birth, this higher ego can look into a spiritual world, just as the lower ego can look into the sense world through the senses – eyes, ears and so on.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰Macquarie Dict. 1988, p. 899.

¹⁷¹Rudolf Steiner, *Das Johannes Evangelium im Verhältnis zu den drei anderen Evangelien*, (Dornach: RSV, 1975), 191, „So steht es als ein Ideal vor der Menschenseele, und so tritt es als eine Wirklichkeit ein für diejenigen, welche die Anweisungen der Geistesforscher befolgen und sich sagen: Das Ich, von dem ich bisher wußte, nimmt teil an der ganzen Außenwelt, es ist mit der Außenwelt vergänglich. Aber in mir schlummert ein zweites Ich, dessen sich die Menschen nicht bewußt sind, aber sich bewußt werden können, das ebenso verbunden ist mit dem Unvergänglichen, wie das erste Ich mit dem Vergänglichen und Zeitlichen verbunden ist. Und mit der Wiedergeburt kann dies höhere Ich ebenso hineinschauen in eine geistige Welt, wie das niedere Ich durch die Sinne - Augen, Ohren und so weiter - in die sinnliche Welt schauen kann.“

In these words, Steiner affirms his belief that there are two parts to the human being, 'the other part', which is referred to in this text, means the divine or higher self. To Steiner the process of becoming initiated requires the development of the potential for spirituality, and this involves the encounter with one's unethical qualities and then eventually an encounter, a merging, with the divine. This activity should then result in the spirit – in Goethean terms, the fair Lily – becoming united to one's being.

The characters present speeches – which are often quite long – in which their inner life, and supra-sensible experiences are portrayed. The audience only find this drama 'dramatic' if they empathize with the experiences and subsequent inner questioning of the characters. Additionally, there is the further barrier to making *Die Pforte* a drama in the customary sense, and that is the difficulty which Steiner has in expressing his understanding of the initiatory process. For this of necessity requires elucidation of supra-sensible experiences. The 'subtle' dramatic element in *Die Pforte* is only sustainable to the extent that the language of the speeches succeed in conveying this supra-sensible element. In the following section, Steiner's struggle with this aspect shall be considered.

Steiner's exposition of the Goethe tale, that is, of the theosophical wisdom which he sees inherent in it – and which had been formative for him – was in effect, the launching pad for a new career as a teacher on spirituality. The formative influence of *Das Märchen* in Steiner's life is reflected in his decision to write a dramatized version to this tale, namely, *Die Pforte der Einweihung*.

2 DIE PFORTE, AN OUTLINE OF ITS STRUCTURE AND THEMES

2A: Describing supra-sensible phenomena, metaphor, ‘transferring’ German into English, and Steiner’s neologisms

As we noted earlier, (Section 1A1) the emphasis on artistic activity – including poetry and dramatic productions – forms a noticeable element in Steiner’s worldview. We also noted (Section 1A3), that Steiner introduced the performance of dramas into Theosophical Society conferences, in 1907, when he also required the conference schedule to include recitation of poetry, performance of music, and had the venue decorated with works of art. He viewed artistic consciousness as similar in its dynamics to the enhanced consciousness which the person attains through spiritual development.

Steiner was especially keen to integrate the artistic element into German theosophical activity. As he stated in the program for the 1907 conference in Munich,

The artistic presentations should be so selected, in the area of sculptural, as well as musical and poetic art, that these items should, together with what is presented from the theosophical view of the world, form an harmonious entirety. For this reason, in one of the sessions, the attempt will also be made to present a Mystery in a dramatic form.¹⁷²

The drama performed at the 1907 conference was written by Edouard Schuré, *The Sacred Drama of Eleusis*. Steiner’s drama, *Die Pforte*, was specifically termed “a Rosicrucian Mystery Drama”, indicating that Steiner considered his drama to be of the same genre as the ancient Greek dramas, but deriving its inspiration from

¹⁷²Rudolf Steiner, *Der Münchner Kongress Pfingsten 1907, und seine Auswirkungen*, (Dornach: RSV, 1977), 25, „Die künstlerischen Darbietungen sollen sowohl auf dem Gebiete der bildenden, wie der musikalischen und poetischen Kunst so ausgewählt werden, daß das Einzelne sich mit dem aus der theosophischen Weltauffassung Vorgebrachten zu einem harmonischen Ganzen zusammenfügt. Deshalb soll in einer der Veranstaltungen auch der Versuch gemacht werden, im Dramatischen die Vorstellung eines Mysteriums zu geben.“

his understanding of the Rosicrucians. *Die Pforte* consists of a Prelude, an Interlude and one Act which has eleven scenes. As the title suggests, the intention of the drama is to portray the challenges encountered by modern individuals, in their striving on the path towards the initial stages of esoteric spiritual development, as taught by Steiner.

In his lectures on the art of speech and drama, Steiner emphasised his conclusion that dramas originated as part of the celebration of the sacred Mysteries in ancient Greece, and only later became secular entertainment,

For in the final analysis however, the development which has led to our contemporary theatre, had its beginning, its germinal form, with all that which was regarded as a Mystery. And one only attains the appropriate understanding of the dramatic art, if one goes back to the art of the Mysteries. In the Mysteries, the concern of art was to trace the primal form of all dramatic portrayals back into those impulses which penetrated into human beings from the spiritual world.¹⁷³

Steiner understood these ancient dramas as performances that were designed to depict for esoteric-pedagogical purpose, the spiritual dynamics occurring in the path to initiation. That is, the dramas were to assist in the training of the acolytes in the temple communities, and also to communicate elements of the mystery-religion to the community at large. Although the precise origin of Greek theatre is unclear, many authorities share the viewpoint held by Schuré and Steiner that the celebration of the esoteric religious cults of ancient Greece was the origin of theatre.¹⁷⁴ In any event, it

¹⁷³Rudolf Steiner, *Sprachgestaltung und Dramatische Kunst*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1969), 226, „Denn letzten Endes liegt die Entwicklung zu unserem Schauspiel hin dennoch in ihrem Anfang, in ihrem Keime bei alledem, was als Mysterium empfunden wird. Und man bekommt nicht eine würdige Auffassung von der Schauspielkunst, wenn man nicht zurückgehen kann zur Mysterienkunst. Mysterienkunst aber war... darauf aus, alle Darstellung zu verfolgen bis zu jenen Impulsen, die aus der geistigen Welt in den Menschen eindringen.“

¹⁷⁴Ronald W. Vince, *Ancient and Medieval Theatre*, (London: Greenwood Press, 1984). Vince provides a clear historical overview of the various theories put forward concerning the link between the Greek Mysteries and the birth of secular theatre.

is clear that dramatic performances about the various deities and their significance for human beings were the focal point of rituals in such places.¹⁷⁵

To Steiner the Mystery dramas of antiquity were designed as didactic artistic presentations of the path to initiation. For example, writing of Eleusis, he states, "The festivals which were celebrated twice yearly offered the great cosmic drama of the destiny of the divine in the world and of the human soul ... with these festivals initiations were connected. The symbolic representation of cosmic and human dramas formed the final act of the consecration of the mystics, which were undertaken here."¹⁷⁶

In a lecture on the Mysteries of antiquity Steiner describes those of ancient Greece as specifically designed to lead the acolyte to encounter divine beings in two spheres, namely in the cosmos, and in the human soul. He termed the former endeavour the way to the upper gods, and the latter path, which lead to an encounter of deities in the depths of human consciousness, he termed, the way to the gods below.¹⁷⁷ Steiner's language here is an adoption of the terminology found in the second century initiatory novel, *The Golden Ass*, by Apuleius, concerning the purposes of the initiation process in the Mysteries of Isis, " ... I entered the presence of the gods of the under-world and the gods of the upper-world, stood near them and worshipped them."¹⁷⁸

Hence, the task of *Die Pforte* is not only that of communicating various elements of the supra-sensible, it also has to convey a sense of a reaching towards a sacred reality. In this task, Steiner used

¹⁷⁵Michael B. Cosmopoulos, *Greek mysteries; the archaeology and ritual of Greek sacred cults*, (London: Routledge, 2003), and S. Angus, *The Mystery Religions*, (New York: Dover, 1975).

¹⁷⁶Rudolf Steiner, *Das Christentum als mystische Tatsache und die Mysterien des Altertums*, (Dornach: RSV, 1976), 94, „Die Feste, die zweimal im Jahre gefeiert wurden, boten das große Weltdrama vom Schicksal des Göttlichen in der Welt und dem der Menschenseele ... Mit den Festen waren Einweihungen verbunden. Die symbolische Darstellung des Welt- und Menschen-dramas bildete den Schlußakt der Mystenweihen, die hier vorgenommen wurden.“

¹⁷⁷Lecture of 27th August 1909, in Rudolf Steiner, *Der Orient im Lichte des Okzidents*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1960), 92-109.

¹⁷⁸Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, trans. Robert Graves, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956), 286.

poetics, especially the metaphor and neologisms, as a tool for the task of communicating his spiritual worldview. He wrote some 300 poems expressing his anthroposophical perspective, as well as his four mystery dramas. In the latter, he made use of metaphorical language to assist overcoming the limitations of purely rational discourse, in the task of presenting the dynamics invoked as a person encounters the spirit.

Steiner's method of using a poetic approach to themes usually treated in rational discourse, rather than the accepted Aristotelian derived logical approach, was typically criticised in the brief notice of his basic text, "*Die Geheimwissenschaft im Umriß*", in *Kindlers Literatur Lexikon*,

The book is impaired through the situation that the method of describing spiritual existence is limited to metaphors, which are taken from the sensual world, and that the interface of the categorial connections is very thin, so that the spirit is not grasped 'as a realm with its own laws' (Max Dessoir).¹⁷⁹

Steiner's view here has affinity to those who advocate the value of metaphor in philosophical (and spiritual) debate, such as Ernesto Grassi, to whom metaphor is fundamental to the process of learned discourse usually reserved for philosophical rationalism,

Furthermore Aristotle makes the decisive statement that rhetoric and philosophy arise from a common presupposition, 'In philosophy too, it is characteristic of the one who accurately aims (eustochos) to see the similarity between things (to homoion ... theorein) that are most distant from each other'.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ *Kindlers Literatur Lexikon im dtv*, ed. Gert Woerner, Rolf Geisler and Rudolf Radler, 1978, Bd. 9, ed. Valentino Bompiani, *Die Geheimwissenschaft im Umriß*, 3816, „Das Werk ist dadurch beeinträchtigt, daß die Methode der Beschreibung des geistigen Seins sich auf Metaphern beschränkt, die der Sinnenwelt entnommen sind, und daß das Geflecht der kategorialen Beziehungen sehr dünn, das Geistige also nicht *als ein Reich eigener Gesetzmäßigkeit* (Max Dessoir) erfaßt ist.“

¹⁸⁰ Ernesto Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1908), 95.

As Veit writes, supporting Grassi, “Knowledge of the phenomena has been subsumed under the categories of logic and the non-rational is dismissed, thus suppressing any awareness of the older function of metaphor as something which expresses ‘archaic’ analogies.”¹⁸¹ A Steiner poem dedicated to the poet Fercher von Steinwand embodies both his attitude to artistic presentation of spiritual themes and his own use of metaphorical language to express spiritual themes,

<p>To understand Ideas Within the chorus of primeval dreams which become revelation of that empowered Beingness which in the primal impelling urges of cosmic existence <u>I</u>s the soul itself – Thus was this poet’s will, And it is beautiful to follow him through primeval dreams on into the realm of the primordial urges.¹⁸²</p>	<p>Im Chor der Urträume zu ergreifen Ideen, die zur Offenbarung werden Des Kräftewesens, das im Urgetriebe dem Weltensein die Seele ist: Das wollte dieser Dichter; Und schön ist’s, ihm zu folgen Durch Urträume hindurch In das Reich der Urtriebe.</p>
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The complex issues raised with regard to primordial or archaic metaphors cannot be examined in this study. Before anyone were to make such an attempt, a prior task of assessing Steiner’s texts in terms of metaphorical usage is required, for what appear to be metaphors in the accepted sense of the term, in his view are non-metaphorical, ‘spiritual-scientific’ descriptions. He views his experiences of spiritual realities as a supra-sensible equivalent of sense perception. It is clear from the way in which Steiner refers to a form of light in supra-sensible realms, that this usage is not intended to

¹⁸¹Walter Veit, *The Potency of Imagery – the Impotence of Rational Language: Ernesto Grassi’s Contributions to Modern Epistemology, Philosophy and Rhetoric*, ed. Donald Philip Verene, Vol 17, No. 4., 233.

¹⁸²Rudolf Steiner, “Fercher von Steinwand”, *Wahrspruchworte*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1969), 233.

be metaphorical, but rather a parallel to the sensory images, as he comments,

So the occultist differentiates the radiant self-luminosity of the spirit, from the remarkable glistening quality of the light which is reflected back from the realm of forms, as soul-light. 'Soul' means, reflected spiritual light, 'spirit' means radiant, creative light.

This challenging attitude is clearly cognizable at times, for example in Scene Three of *Die Pforte*, the spiritual leader of Johannes, Benedictus, invokes a spiritual blessing for Johannes saying, "Let be radiant in his inner being, that which can illumine his soul with spiritual light / Let resound in his inner being, what can awaken for him the self to the spirit's joy of coming into existence."¹⁸³

These poetic expressions are not considered by Steiner as metaphorical, but as referring to specific spiritual agencies. When a person attains to the Platonic realm of the Idea, this realm imbues him with a power that creates radiance in the soul, and which also creates a non-physical, audible element. That is, the soul body of the meditant becomes radiant, and they also become aware of a type of speaking emanating from spiritual realities. These concepts which are associated with Steiner's view of enhanced consciousness capabilities, are examined further in Section 4F.

There is a further technique used by Steiner in this regard, which seeks to convey that the non-metaphorical quality of his perceiving in the supra-sensible. Indeed Steiner seeks to indicate that such a perception is inherently valid, even when the mental picture of the perceived thing is incorrect. Such a situation therefore shows merely the unskilled cognizing of the perceived, and thereby subtly confirms the accuracy of the perceiving itself. This intention forms a parallel to the conviction Steiner expresses in his early epistemological works (examined in Section 1A2), that when an optical illusion interferes with sense perception, resulting in an incorrect conclusion (mental image), this merely demonstrates the accuracy of the sense organs.

¹⁸³*Pforte*, 74, "... Im Innern lasset ihm erstrahlen, was ihm durchleuchten kann die Seele mit dem Geisteslicht. Im Innern lasset ihm ertönen, was ihm erwecken kann das Selbst zu Geistes Werdelust."

An example of this non-metaphorical imagery occurs in Scene Two; whilst Johannes is in a meditative state he leaves his body and perceives his deceased girl friend. He says to himself, "I see my bodily shell. It is an alien entity outside me; it is remote from me. There hovers towards me another body. I have to speak with its mouth: 'He has brought me bitter distress; I had trusted him completely, he left me in my grief alone' ..." The reference here to seeing another body is decidedly strange, and will be examined in the next paragraph. Steiner clearly means to convey that the self of Johannes is literally outside his body – but still capable of perceiving – and that he beholds his deceased girl friend, and actually experiences her grief and stress.

At this point, the experience is described as if it were a factual not a metaphorical thing. It bears similarity in terms of its perceived objective, factual nature, to descriptions of out-of-the-body experiences found in New Age literature. But Johannes describes what he sees as "another [physical] body", which in the entire context of Steiner's worldview is seriously inconsistent. Her body no longer exists; it can only be a soul-body which moves around in that continuum, so what Johannes is seeing must be something else. But neither this mysterious thing in question, nor Johannes' experiencing of it, is intended to be metaphorical, for he soon has a direct experience of her grief, which he later acknowledges as fully objectively valid. So, here Steiner is intending to convey that both the girlfriend and her emotive state are specific realities, and objectively perceived. However, with regard to Johannes' perception of the form of his girlfriend, he has made an erroneous mental picture as to its true nature.

Thus instead of this passage having metaphorical elements, the audience is learning that, in Steiner's view, perception in the spiritual realm is valid and indeed – in terms of the conclusions made from the perceptions – is subject to the same kind of distortions as the sense world. Furthermore, analogous to the sense perceptions distortions associated with a line of trees disappearing into the distance, any such distortions in the supra-sensible sphere which lead to erroneous conclusions, simply validate the inherent accuracy of the perceiving organs, but highlight the unskillful analysis of the perceptions.

Furthermore, in considering Steiner's approach to metaphor, in terms of interpreting his texts, and of rendering them into English, there is also the problem of Steiner's use of language in general. In *Die Pforte* Steiner includes poetic passages, which are often burdened by neologisms. The purpose of his method is to facilitate his presentation of dynamics, which are alien to mundane reality, but particular to spiritual realms and spiritual beings. Content of this kind in *Die Pforte* is often used to express strikingly unusual supra-sensible postulates, and these would be very unwieldy to elucidate in prose. If cast into a prose form, or a non-metaphorical form, such a speech would stultify the dramatic element considerably, but his use of the poetics often results in enigmatic passages. For example in Scene Five, Benedictus, the great spiritual teacher, wants to know what another character, called Felix Balde, can say about the needs of the Earth for human spirituality; the Earth is considered to be a living being. Felix replies, "The light, which shines forth in the human being as the fruit of knowledge – it is to become the nourishment of those powers who, in the earthly darkness, serve the cosmic course."¹⁸⁴

In the process of assessing the scenes in *Die Pforte*, to ascertain the primary elements of Steiner's anthroposophy, one encounters several problems. Firstly, in the context of an English language appraisal of his texts, there is the translation problem as the original is in German, but in addition, Steiner's German has several characteristics that cause particular difficulties. Firstly, in the poetic passages, or in prose texts, there are phrases which refer to a spiritual reality, which is never clearly explained. Secondly, there is the use of remarkable neologisms, which can be grammatically ambiguous, creating a barrier to assessing the syntax.

These factors enhance the normal difficulty of rendering Steiner's scholarly German into English, rendered more problematic through the situation that applies to mystical texts in general. Namely, Steiner is communicating conclusions about supra-sensible matters in 'earthly' language. In the course of endeavouring to communicate his ideas, Steiner also makes specific use of meta-

¹⁸⁴*Pforte*, 94, „Das Licht, das in den Menschen als Frucht des Wissens leuchtet, es soll zur Nahrung werden den Mächten, die im Erdendunkel dem Weltengange dienen.“

phors. These can be quite useful where the thematic is in effect, 'mundane', and the lateral link between the metaphorical image and that which it is intended to represent both belong to this sensible word or to common human experience.

But where in metaphorical usage, a mundane image is invoked into use to represent a supra-sensible factor, then the link is harder to discern. In this situation, the reader, or the audience in a theatre hall, has to attempt to link the sensible image to a reality quite alien to their experience. In this sense, the criticism in *Kindlers Literatur Lexikon* of Steiner's presentation of spiritual processes effective in humanity's evolution, is understandable, but of limited validity, in that the metaphor itself *can* provide some assistance to the imagination to grasp aspects of the supra-sensible which are not assimilable into a logical description.

The above Steiner verse, dedicated to von Steinwand, already indicates the overall problem. In using the German term 'Kräftewesens' he wishes to refer to something like a 'forces-quiddity', which is understood to be within the primordial urges (Urgetriebe) that are inherent to 'cosmic reality'. He then concludes that this 'forces-quiddity' *is* the human soul. My rendering, 'empowered Being-ness' for a more literal 'forces-quiddity', and 'primal impelling urges' for primordial urges, attempts to firstly bring these unusual German metaphors into a readable English form.

At the same time the result has to assist the English reader to formulate two metaphorical images which approximate to the German images. This in turn, should facilitate the process of relating these metaphors to each other and then to comprehend the elusive conceptual conclusion presented in the original text, namely "that empowered Being-ness in the primal impelling urges of cosmic existence".

These difficulties inherent in understanding Steiner's texts, including *Die Pforte*, and in translating his material into English, are exemplified in a variety of published Steiner texts, which contain passages that strikingly exhibit the problems that interpreters of Steiner's worldview encounter. However, the problems in these published texts do not derive entirely from the use of metaphor, there is also the question of the level of skill in textual criticism and of expertise in Steiner's worldview. A number of Steiner's verses

have been in print for decades in such books as *Verses and Meditations*.¹⁸⁵

This volume includes a verse concerning planetary influences, 'The Mysteries of Ephesus'. Its last two lines are, "Daß Saturns Weltenalte Geist-Innigkeit / Dich dem Raumessein und Zeitenwerden weihe!" The published translation renders this as, "that ghostly Saturn's old-world memoried-devoutness unto the world of space and time thee hallow."¹⁸⁶ The problem here, for an assessment of Steiner through the English language, is similar to that of the above poem to von Steinwand. The above text is quite false to the surface meaning of the German text, and indeed is false to the actual intended meaning, so far as this can be ascertained. The task has to be to express supra-sensible realities from Steiner's worldview in English, but without specialist knowledge of his works, it is difficult to ascertain precisely the underlying concept, which he wishes to convey.

In this instance, the phrase includes one German term, *Innigkeit*, which in Steiner's usage, is quite resistant to being translated into English, because its referent is not associated with human relations of any kind. This term is usually rendered as intimacy, affection, warmth, sincerity or closeness. With regard to the above Steiner phrase, Saturns Weltenalte Geist-Innigkeit, it is clear that generally he is ascribing to Saturn a link to spiritual realms which is potent, ancient and which also is directly efficacious in humanity with regard to bringing about an orientation towards spirituality.

This is already a very dense statement, but without extensive knowledge of Steiner's cosmology, the verse remains very obscure. In Steiner's cosmology, evolutionary phases are presented, in which the efficacy of planetary and zodiac influences are elucidated, in a succession of aeons; from knowledge of this perspective, the verse can become more readily comprehended. In anthroposophical cosmology, the planet Saturn is understood to have an association with the primal spiritual influences active at the dawn of creation of humanity.¹⁸⁷ He maintained, that these spiritual influences com-

¹⁸⁵*Verses and Meditations*, First published by Rudolf Steiner Press, London, in 1961.

¹⁸⁶*ibid*, 77.

¹⁸⁷Rudolf Steiner's cosmology is presented in many volumes of his *Complete Works*, commencing with lectures from 1903; his main

menced several aeons ago, and they are understood to have created the foundation of the human will, or volition; on another level, they also created the rudiments for the metabolic process and also the limb system in the human body.

It is these aspects of the human corporeality which are understood to be the vessel for the human will. These ancient Saturn forces are regarded as still efficacious today, within the subconscious volition of the human being, where their activity man-very subtly, in a variety of ways. These include in the sensing of one's destiny, and in maintaining a feeling for the existence of the spirit, in particular, of God. The details of these elements, and all their dense ramifications, are not our focus here, but in the event that a person had acquired such knowledge of Steiner's works that these ideas were clearly grasped, then – and this is one of the difficulties inherent in comprehending Steiner's poetic presentations of his anthroposophy – the above verse could be more clearly understood. It could then be rendered so as to clarify Steiner's view that in the pre-existence phase (pre-incarnate stage) of the human soul, these spiritual forces are accessed. The line may then read, "that Saturn's primeval attunement to the Spirit may consecrate you to the world of space and the flow of time."

These difficulties inherent in understanding Steiner's texts are a common feature to his verses; this is exemplified in *Der Seelenkalender* (*The Soul Calendar*). This is a work comprising 52 verses, to be used as a contemplative guide to help the student of Steiner's teachings feel the spiritual element active within the seasonal processes. It is a type of pericope, but designed to accompany the natural cycle of the year, not the ecclesiastical year. Like the speeches in *Die Pforte*, the verses of *Der Seelenkalender* often contain neologisms, in the attempt to present complex spiritual dynamics, which however, are often not specifically defined.

Verse 34 is a good example of *Der Seelenkalender* text; it occurs each year in late autumn,

written text which gives a brief description of the spiritual forces associated with Saturn, is in *Die Geheimwissenschaft im Umriss*, written in 1910.

Geheimnisvoll das Alt-Bewahrte
mit neuerstandem Eigensein
Im Innern sich belebend fühlen:
Es soll erweckend Weltenkräfte
In meines Lebens Außenwerk ergießen
Und werdend mich ins Dasein prägen.

A published version in English renders the verse in the following form,

Mysteriously to feel within,
The quickening of the treasur'd past,
With Selfhood, newly risen;
This shall, arousing forces of the world,
Pour itself into my life's outer work
and growing root me in existence.¹⁸⁸

Due consideration has to be given to the fact that this verse comes from a specialized context, and also that understanding of it is dependent upon some of its antecedent verses. However, even so, the above English text remains obscure. There are also some awkward English phrases, but the main factor is the obvious difficulty to the translator in understanding the German original. The same awkward phraseology, and too narrow interpretation of the German text, is to be found in various passages in the published translation of *Die Pforte*, and these shall be examined shortly.

For example, in the first line of verse 34 of *Der Seelenkalender*, the expression, 'das Alt-Bewahrte' occurs; this is a German idiom which refers to something found to be of value over the generations (or decades, or years) and hence carefully kept as a treasured thing. However, a careful appraisal of the entire book reveals that here this expression is used in an unusual manner, the time frame being just a little over three months. It is referring to a seasonal process connected with the late summertime. An examination of the *Soul Calendar* reveals that this text has several mirror image patterns built into it, wherein particular sets of verses reflect each other, as

¹⁸⁸*The Calendar of the Soul*, transl. William and Liselotte Mann, (Stroud: Hawthorn Press, 1990).

in a polarity. The mirror image pattern of interest to us here, is one in which the first two lines of a verse are the reverse of those in its opposite verse. Verse 1 starts as follows,

Wenn aus den Weltenweiten (When from the wide expanses of space)
Die Sonne spricht zum Menschensinn" (The sun speaks to human sense)

It is the mirror image of the last verse, number 52,

Wenn aus den Seelentiefen (When from the depths of the soul)
Der Geist sich wendet zu dem Weltensein" (The spirit turns towards cosmic being)

Similarly, verse 2, commences as follows,

Ins Äußere des Sinnesalls (In the outer world of the senses)
Verliert Gedankenmacht ihr Eigensein" (The power of thought lose its own being)

It stands in contrast to the penultimate verse, number 51,

Ins Innre des Menschenwesens (Into the inner-being of the human being)
Ergießt der Sinne Reichtum sich". (The senses' richness pours itself)

The mirror-image verse for verse 34 is number 19; it commences with,

Geheimnisvoll das Neu-Empfang'ne (Mysteriously, the Newly-conceived)
Mit der Erinnerung zu umschließen". (to encompass with the memory)

And this compares with verse 34, in a published translation, as given above,

Geheimnisvoll das Alt-Bewahrte (Mysteriously the treasur'd past)
mit neuerstandem Eigensein (With Selfhood, newly risen)

So, verse 34 has reference to a process that verse 19 specifically expresses, and which occurred some three months earlier. An examination of Steiner's lectures on the subject of the seasonal cycle, reveals that he sees the human soul as absorbing 'spiritual forces' from the summer sun; these are preserved in the Earth's spiritual aspect, and become absorbed by the human soul.¹⁸⁹ This is the 'Neu-Empfang'ne' (newly conceived) of verse 19. By the late autumn this spiritual element has now become the 'treasured something' from the (recent) past, the summer. It has been preserved within the human soul, and in the autumn may become efficacious in the soul. The beginning of this process is alluded to in verse 19. To ascertain Steiner's understanding of the yearly cycle with sufficient clarity, to be able to select the correct nuance of a German expression in all of the 52 verses when rendering them into English is a very substantial task, given the size of his literary estate. Verse 34 would perhaps then be rendered along these lines,

1 To feel mysteriously the Treasure,
 2 from some time ago,
 3 With its own being newly arisen,
 4 quickening itself within me:
 5 It shall pour awakened cosmic forces
 6 Into my life's external deeds
 7 And, evolving on, imprint me into existence.

This entirely different nuance arises when the text is considered on the basis of Steiner's spiritual ecology. With regard to lines 1 and 2, the treasure, being something received in the summer derives from a *recent* past, and it is *this* (unidentified) treasure which is quickening, not the past itself. Further, with regard to lines 3 and 4, in Steiner's worldview, the neologism, "eigensein" (own, specific

¹⁸⁹The sources for the remarks concerning Steiner's spiritual ecology in these paragraphs derive from the many references and elucidations in his *Complete Works*, in particular, GA vols. 219, (*Das Verhältnis der Sternwelt zum Menschen und des Menschen zur Sternwelt*), 223 (*Der Jahreskreislauf als Atmungsvorgang der Erde und die vier großen Festeszeiten*), 224 (*Die menschliche Seele in ihrem Zusammenhang mit göttlich-geistigen Individualitäten*), 229 (*Das Miterleben des Jahreslaufes in vier kosmischen Imaginationen*).

being-ness), can be an attribute of many kinds of self aware beings. But it especially applies to something existing in a lesser, 'elemental' condition of consciousness, which is devoid of self awareness. An example of such as an organism would be one composed of Steiner's ether forces. The term 'selfhood', in contrast to 'eigensein', cannot be applied to a class of entities or organisms which have no soul, but only ether energies. Hence the text can be understood to mean that the *treasure* is what is undergoing a vivification in the student, resulting in the treasure having an enhanced existence, but *not* attaining selfhood. The published translation is in error here.

In addition, in the context of Steiner's extensive elucidations of this subject, with regard to lines 5 and 6, from the ambiguous syntax, quite a different conclusion can be made respecting the treasure, which the translator above described as 'arousing forces of the world', and tends to imply earthly influences. Namely, since this treasure is described by Steiner, in various lectures, as deriving from cosmic origins, the phrase may become, it 'shall pour awakened cosmic forces' into the soul. Further, with regard to the term 'Welt', which is normally used to refer to the Earth or the universe in German, there are several possible referents in Steiner's use, namely, the planet Earth, or it may be cognate with 'cosmos' (which is not only the universe but the spiritual realms as well) or the term can be applied to what he describes as 'our zodiac-solar system'.

In any event, the forces imbued by the planet in summer are understood to be from beyond the Earth. Additionally, the ambiguous nature and position of 'erweckend' (awakened/ awakening) allows another interpretation, that the treasure is not arousing the forces in question, but rather, the treasure is the cosmic forces, and these forces become awakened (or efficacious) naturally, as the autumn proceeds. Again, as with the line from the 'astrological' verse, one experiences that the interpretation of a Steiner poetic text faces very substantial obstacles. Additionally, it seems clear that this cannot have escaped the notice of Steiner, indeed it expresses a conscious intention – a point to which we shall return later in this section.

A final example of textual difficulties, outside of *Die Pforte*, is a very striking example of the confusion which these difficulties

incur for those who wish to engage with Steiner's texts. It concerns a neologism in his central meditative verse, the *Grundstein Meditation (The Foundation Stone Meditation)*. This is a lengthy verse, given in late December 1923, on the occasion of the re-founding of the Anthroposophical Society. 1923 had been a difficult year for this Society for a variety of reasons, in particular the burning down of the building, the Goetheanum. Steiner wished to give a stronger impetus, enthusiasm and dedication to his movement. As part of his renewal attempts, he provided this large verse, as a quintessential expression of the anthroposophical worldview. In the last section of it, he refers to the Christian truth that as a result of the life of Christ, divine reality entered the Earthly reality, "In der Zeiten-Wende /Trat das Welten-Geistes-Licht in den irdischen Wesenstrom ..." ¹⁹⁰

The verse goes on to say, in a direct allusion to the Christmas festival, that this light streamed into human hearts, warmed the simple shepherds' hearts, illumined the wise head of kings, and so on. The neologism here, a triple noun, "Welten-Geistes-Licht" has been understood in such a way as to be translated, "At the turning-point of time the Spirit-Light of the World entered the earthly stream of being". However, the noun is ambiguous (the referent or referents of the genitive cases are unclear), hence it may also be translated as, "the Light of the Spirit of the Cosmos". Whereas the former rendering is vague and tends to imply a source of spiritual light from within the world, the earthly realm, especially our planet, the latter rendering enables a specific element in Steiner's worldview to be identified. Research into Steiner's nomenclature for divine beings, provides reasons to query the accepted version, and to approve the latter version. The term, 'the Spirit of the Cosmos', appears to be the more correct, as it is used to refer to three specific divine beings; all three of which are reasonably applicable in this instance.

The decision has then to be made as to which of these three beings is meant in this verse. One of these appears to be particularly applicable, namely the primal, uncaused God. However, for this

¹⁹⁰Rudolf Steiner, *Die Weihnachtstagung zur Begründung der Allgemeinen Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft, 1923-1924*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1963), 59.

one of the three usages of this neologism, the only clear evidence as to its meaning, is a note in the Steiner archives, namely an entry in one of Steiner's private note-books. This note identified the 'Weltengeist' as 'the creative primal Power of the cosmos', in effect, God.¹⁹¹

This again confirms the barrier to comprehension of Steiner's anthroposophical texts through the use of dense neologisms and elusive metaphors in a context where clarifying elucidations of key terms are rare. The point here is that, without specialist knowledge of Steiner's corpus, the problem is increased by the various, unexpected range of nuances of meaning in his texts. Hence the possibility to absorb and respond to the subtle dramatic tension of *Die Pforte* is likewise restricted, especially if the audience has not undertaken prior study of the text.

Whereas the above examples indicate more a problem of style, there are other examples of the multiple difficulties involved in assessing passages from Steiner's drama. For example, at the close of Scene Three, the scene ends with a spirit-voice that sums up the essence of Johannes' newly developing spiritual consciousness. The rhetoric in this passage alludes to the Platonic Idea-realm, which plays a major role in Steiner's worldview. The German text was published with a syntactical error. A reading of Steiner's draft notes for *Die Pforte* reveals that this passage in the final edition, as published in German, is syntactically wrong.

In the published German version of this speech, there is a full stop after *Urweltgründe*, in the phrase, 'Es steigen seine Gedanken in Urweltgründe. Was als Schatten ...' However in the draft version, the final word is not followed by a full stop, but by an 'em' dash. Restoring this original syntax alters the passage, giving it a clearer meaning. It is, correctly,

Es steigen seine Gedanken in Urweltgründe – Was als Schatten er gedacht, was als Schemen er erlebt, entschwebet der Gestaltenwelt, von deren Fülle die Menschen denkend in Schatten träumen, von deren Fülle die Menschen sehend in Schemen leben.

¹⁹¹Rudolf Steiner, *Seelenübungen mit Wort- und Sinnbild Meditationen*, (Dornach: RSV, 1997), 496, „[‘Er’ ist das Kraftwort] für den Weltwillen, den Weltengeist ... Dieser ... ist die schaffende Urkraft der Welt.“

This difficult passage is used as a specific dramatic device, namely as the voice of an unseen spiritual being, providing a summary of the primary dynamics of the entire scene, and indeed to some extent, of the preceding scenes. Therefore, it has to express clearly the essential purpose of Steiner's view of spiritual development. It is translated in the published Pusch text as follows;

Thoughts now guide him to depths of world-beginnings;
what as shadows he has thought,
what as phantoms he has felt,
soars out, beyond the world of forms,—
world of whose fullness men,
when thinking, dream in shadows;
world, from whose fullness men,
when seeing, live within phantoms.

The passage as rendered here by the translator appears to be erroneous, because it is inconsistent in its meaning. In this English rendering, the speech appears to say that Johannes's own mental productions were mere phantasms, but now soar out beyond this realm of formed things to a realm associated with the beginnings of Creation; however, notwithstanding that, the world of Form is, in its fullness, only vaguely encountered by human beings.

As we shall see, from a consideration of the scenes in *Die Pforte*, the purpose of Johannes' strivings is to point out to the audience that the acolyte who does begin to achieve higher consciousness, enters the formless, archetypal Platonic 'realm of Ideas'. This realm is beyond the 'world of Forms', wherein created, hence formed (structured and materialized) objects exist. From a consideration of Steiner's view of this 'world of Ideas', and of spiritual development in general, it is clear that this passage has been misunderstood. By taking cognizance of the 'Em' dash at the end of line one, it is clear that the subject of the initial phrase is the subject also of the descriptive clauses, which make up the bulk of the passage.

On this basis, and in light of the above, it is therefore correctly rendered in English as,

His thoughts are descending into
the foundations of the primeval world —

what he thought as shadows,
what he experiences as apparitions,
now soars above the World of Forms,
into a realm of whose fullness, people,
in thinking, are merely dreaming in shadows,
of whose fullness people, in seeing,
are merely living in apparitions.

Its meaning is even more clearly revealed by achieving a more English style in the syntax of the translation,

His thoughts descend into the foundations of the primeval world – a realm of whose fullness, people, in thinking, are merely dreaming in shadows, of whose fullness, people, in seeing, are merely living in apparitions. What he thought as shadows, what he experiences as apparitions, now soars above the world of Forms.

In other words, in this rendering, the passage shows that spiritual development is viewed by Steiner as quintessentially developing the capacity to attain to consciousness of the archetypal spiritual realm of the Platonic Idea. However, as we have noted earlier in this section, clarity of meaning of poetic passages in Steiner's texts, calls for study of the extensive body of his works. We also noted that this dynamic would have been quite clear to Steiner; so it becomes evident that his verses in his drama, *Die Pforte*, are not designed for ease of assimilation by large numbers of people. *Die Pforte* is not intended to be a popular drama.

On the contrary, it presents challenges, if not obstacles, to the person seeking to engage with it. In this connection, it is known that in the ancient Mysteries of various cultures entry was barred to the acolyte until a time of probation had been successfully passed. It seems clear that Steiner's poetic-meditative verses, (not his specifically elucidatory texts) and thus to some extent *Die Pforte* itself, were designed to embody that 'Mystery' dynamic. Now that these conclusions have clarified the dynamics in Steiner's literary works, an overview of the individual scenes in *Die Pforte* can be undertaken, followed by a detailed consideration of their qualities.

2B: An overview of the scenes in *Die Pforte*

The Prelude

Die Pforte commences with the Prelude, in which two women discuss their lives in respect of attitudes to cultural matters and spirituality. From the dialogue between these two, the audience learns that the two women friends cannot go out together that night because they are going to see two different plays. We noted earlier that the name of each character in *Die Pforte* has a specific allegorical meaning. However, in the printed text of the drama, where a 'key' to this allegorical element is provided, two characters, Sophia and Estella, are not included as having an allegorical meaning. Nevertheless, it does appear to apply to them; the name "Sophia" derives from ancient Greek, and means 'wisdom'.¹⁹² In his exegetical lectures on the New Testament, Steiner describes this name as a designation in esoteric circles of antiquity for the soul who has achieved spiritualisation.¹⁹³

The name "Estella" is generally thought to derive from the phrase 'a star'.¹⁹⁴ In this connection, however, the name of one of the three women who represent the three consciousness strands in the soul, Astrid, needs to be noted. This name also means a 'star' or star-like, but whereas Estella derives from the Latin term, 'stella', the name 'Astrid', comes from the Greek term, 'astron', even though it has been transmitted into English via Latin literature, deriving from 'astrum', meaning 'a star'.¹⁹⁵ Thus in *Die Pforte* there is the representative of thinking – Astrid – with a nuance of classical Greek culture, and the representative of a way of thinking which rejects the esoteric-spiritual, Estella, derived from Latin.

¹⁹²*Oxford Dictionary of Christian Names*, ed. E. G. Withycombe, 259.

¹⁹³Rudolf Steiner, *Das Johannes Evangelium*, (Dornach: RSV, 1981), 203.

¹⁹⁴*Oxford Dictionary of Christian Names*, ed. E. G. Withycombe, 101, "Estella" appears to have been coined in French dramatic circles in the nineteenth century.

¹⁹⁵*A Latin-English Dictionary*, eds. Rev. John. T. White and Rev. J. E. Riddle, (London: Longman, 1862), 171, "Astrum", "Stella", 1848. *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ed. C. T. Onions, (Oxford: OUP, 1966), 57 "astral", 867 "stellar".

Stella remains a character who, though intellectually gifted, rejects esoteric-spiritual concepts, and is therefore linked to the Roman world.

The allegorical element here reflects Steiner's view of Roman culture as one which was 'earth-bound' and antagonistic to the spiritual, in which the transition from priestly wisdom to human wisdom took place.¹⁹⁶ Whereas Astrid is a character who responds well to the request of Maria to spiritualize herself, and has a Greek aspect, thus the implication – of an intellectuality which can absorb spiritual concepts – reflects Steiner's view of classical Greek culture which accepted the spiritual, indeed it nurtured the source of esoteric wisdom, the Mysteries. Hence Astrid has a place in the initiatory processes of the drama, whilst Estella remains outside of this, she only appears on stage in her home.

The Society of which Sophia is a member (it is in effect, the Theosophical-Anthroposophical Society) is producing a drama, whereas Estella is booked to see another play, entitled, "*The Disinherited of Body and Soul*". In using this device of 'a play within the play' (or least an allusion to another play), to commence the exposition of the dramatic plot, Steiner is establishing the social context for *Die Pforte* in relation to mainstream culture. Estella is sceptical of the belief system of her friend Sophia, and thus has no interest in the esoteric play which Sophia is going to see.

In using this technique, Steiner can juxtapose the attitude typical of many educated people, which he views as primarily sceptical of spiritual-esoteric themes, to the underlying thematic material of *Die Pforte*. Estella is very forthright regarding the personality problems to be found amongst followers of this spiritual Society;

Estella: ... those of your fellow-thinkers are who swear by your ideas and manifest the worst sort of spiritual conceit, even though the emptiness and banality of their minds is expressed in every word they say, and in their entire behaviour. And I don't want to point out how indifferent and unfeeling some of your adherents show themselves to be towards their fellow human beings.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophie des Rosenkreuzers*, 134.

¹⁹⁷*Pforte*, 17, ,, ... diejenigen deiner Gesinnungsgenossen, die auf eure Ideen schwören und den geistigen Hochmut in schlimmer Art zur Schau tragen, trotzdem die Leerheit und Banalität ihrer Seele aus

Sophia responds that people in her movement make every effort to not overestimate an individual, merely because they are part of the movement. However, in that Estella also points out that many of Sophia's associates are not 'spiritual' people, this allows affirmation of the criticism of individuals in spiritual movements, whilst also indicating that this does not invalidate the movement inaugurated by Steiner as such. The dialogue between Estella and Sophia permits acknowledgement of the personality problems found in such societies, as well as the inherent divergence between anthroposophical and mainstream attitudes to deeper life questions. This theme is developed further in the Prelude, and will be examined again later.

Scene One

Scene One is primarily concerned with the exposition of the plot. The main human characters are introduced, and they speak of their responses to a lecture that has just been delivered by their teacher, Benedictus. This name means "blessed" in Latin, to correspond to his position as the great teacher. One of the characters is Maria, whose role in assisting her friend Johannes, to find his way to spirituality is very significant, and it is likely that the name 'Maria' is indicative of the virtue which is ascribed in Christianity to Mary, the woman who had the sanctity necessary to enable her to be the mother of the Redeemer. The major character is Johannes, his efforts at developing spirituality is a primary theme in the drama.¹⁹⁸ It is likely that Johannes refers to St. John the Divine, 'the beloved disciple' of Christ. That St. John is a very significant entity to Steiner, is shown in the fact that the Goetheanum was originally

jedem ihrer Worte und aus ihrem ganzen Verhalten spricht. Und auch darauf will ich dich nicht weisen, wie stumpf und gefühllos gegen ihre Mitmenschen gerade manche eurer Anhänger sich zeigen.“

¹⁹⁸The actual meaning of the name, 'Mary' is probably not under consideration here, as its meaning is disputed and hence unlikely to be used for symbolic purpose by Steiner. For example, *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Names*, ed. E. G. Withycombe, (London: OUP, 1950), lists "wished-for-child"; whereas J. T. Shipley lists "bitter", *Dictionary of Word Origins*, (Totowa: Littlefield Adams, 1967).

called '*der Johannesbau*', 'the Johannes building', in honour of St. John.¹⁹⁹

The setting of this scene is an ante-room where the audience is discussing the lecture that Benedictus has given. The first speech is that of Maria, who notes how depressed is her friend Johannes, who is an artist,

It concerns me deeply, my friend, to see you withering in soul and spirit ... once when I saw your eyes there was reflected in them only joy at all they saw ... now it is as though within you every power is extinguished, creative joy is dead in you ...²⁰⁰

Johannes agrees that he is despondent, but does not volunteer any reason for this despondency, until Maria reveals that she perceives it is her presence in his life that has created this. Johannes affirms that this despondency was brought to the surface at first by the effect of his unrequited feelings for Maria; "What carries your soul into the clear heights of heaven, if I share it with you, casts me down, into murky realms of death."²⁰¹ Significantly, Johannes, who has all this doubt and despair, is given a surname, 'Thomasius', a name that, like Johannes, also has a strong New Testament allusion. St. Thomas, like St. John, was a disciple of Christ, and he became known as the 'doubting disciple' after the episode reported in John's Gospel (20:24) where Thomas doubted the reports of the resurrected Saviour.

His friend Maria expresses regret that she has this effect on him, for it is distressing and enigmatic to her, in as much as various people, in close proximity to her, often lose their happiness. This dynamic is continued in Scene Two, and will be the subject of more detailed consideration in Section 3C.

After this initial discussion between Maria and Johannes, the rest of the cast – excluding spirit beings – are introduced, the various

¹⁹⁹Lindenberg, *Steiner*, 535.

²⁰⁰*Pforte*, 21, „So nahe geht es mir, mein Freund, dass ich dich welken seh' an Geist und Seele ... Ich sah in deine Auge einst: Sie spiegelten Freude nur an aller Dinge Wesenheit ... und nun ist wie erloschen in deinem Innern alle Kraft, wie tot ist deine Schaffensfreude ...“

²⁰¹*Pforte*, 24, „Was deine Seele trägt in lichte Himmelshöhen, will stürzen mich, erleb ich es mir dir, in finstre Todesgründe.“

spirit beings appear in later scenes. The people are all members of the anthroposophical audience, and they are discussing the impact of the lecture, that they have just heard. Two further characters are Felix and Felicia Balde, a couple who live in nature, up in the mountains, their names denote happiness in Latin and they represent spiritual wisdom and the treasures of past spiritual-religious traditions. Since their surname, Balde, appears to derive from the German term “bald” which means soon, it may be that these two have a role of conferring or presaging imminent happiness for the Youth, and others. These other characters make only small speeches; these include the three women, who represent elements of the soul, Philia whose name is probably derived from Greek, since she represents the emotions and sensitivity, and Philia can be derived from ‘phileo’, the Greek verb for affection.²⁰² So Philia feels the differing opinions being expressed in the ante-room, and to her they are “as a chorus, which unites everyone”.

The second person, Luna, represents volition, and her name is the Latin term for ‘moon-like’, and she speaks of “the purpose and goal of life”. Why Steiner correlates the moon to the will is a feature of his ‘Mystery’ rhetoric. It is not meant to be understood until extensive knowledge of the details of his worldview is acquired. This is one of numerous elements in *Die Pforte* of this nature, which gives the drama, to a limited extent, a similar enigmatic quality to Goethe’s allegorical fairy tale. However, an investigation into Steiner’s view of the will reveals that he concludes that it has a spiritual link to dynamics active in sleeping and dreaming, and the moon can symbolize the night-time, with its dreams.²⁰³

In addition, later in this scene, Astrid, (thinking) speaks, showing her spiritually inclined intellectuality by supporting the esoteric-spiritual perspective of the lecturer, against the doubts expressed by two well educated men, Capesius (an historian) and Strader (a technician), “Oh, if two could only tread the ground which your

²⁰²A *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, ed. Walter Bauer, 2nd revised ed., eds. F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, (Chicago: Univ. Chicago press, 1979), 859, fil_w.

²⁰³Rudolf Steiner, *Die Ergänzung heutiger Wissenschaft durch Anthroposophie*, (Dornach: RSV, 1973), 73.

thinking wants to avoid!”²⁰⁴ Capesius reveals an aversion in intelligence to the spiritual, but in his feelings he is more open to it than Strader. The name Capesius may have been coined from two Latin terms, ‘caput’ which means ‘the head’ and ‘capeso’ which means ‘to catch at something with zeal’.²⁰⁵ In any event he does show an eagerness to hear fairy stories from Felicia Balde, to enrich his mind, “And Felicia tells many a tale, in fabulous pictures...I do not ask the sources of her words, I think then of just one thing with clarity, how new life flows forth into my soul ...”²⁰⁶

On the other hand, the name Strader may be coined from the German verb, ‘strahlen’ which means to shine, but it is also used to mean releasing radioactive energy – a pivotal new interest for science a century ago. Strader, as a materialist scientist, rejects any spiritual concept, but is yet attracted to the lectures. In addition there is Theodora (a psychic woman), her name means ‘God’s gift’, and through her psychic powers she helps the characters in various ways.

Benedictus himself makes a short speech indicating how much he treasures the participation of these two country folk. Another character, named ‘the Other Maria’, who represents the Green Snake, makes a long speech which affirms the value of esoteric wisdom, as it gives her solace and inner support for her social work,

On many missions I could certainly feel my own will’s powerlessness; I had to continually seek new strength from the abundance, which flows here from sources of the spirit. The warm and magical power of the words to which I listen here, streams down into my hands and flows through them on like balsam, when they touch people laden with sorrow.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ *Pforte*, 38, „Ach könntet ihr den Boden doch betreten, den euer Denken meiden will!“

²⁰⁵ *A Latin-English Dictionary*, 254, 258.

²⁰⁶ *Pforte*, 41-42, „ ... Und Frau Felicia erzählt in Bildern wunderbar ... Ich frage nicht, woher sie ihre Worte hat. Ich denke dann an eines nur mit Klarheit, wie meiner Seele neues Leben fließt ...“

²⁰⁷ *Pforte*, 46 „Ich fühlte wohl auf vielen Wegen die Ohnmacht meines Willens; Ich muß stets neue Kraft mir holen aus dem Reichtum, der hier aus Geistesquellen fließt. Die warme Zauberkraft der Worte, die hier ich höre, ergießt in meine Hände sich und fließt wie Balsam weiter, berührt die Hand den Leidbeladenen. “

The nuance here of a selfless surrendering to the spirit is a keynote of this character, she shall be considered further in Section 3. Two further characters are Theodosius and Romanus, these are described by Steiner as representing love and initiative, respectively. Theodosius means in Latin, 'divinely given', and the term, Romanus implies a person of Rome – as we noted earlier, to Steiner, Rome is associated with the more earthly element, but it is also associated with strong individualism, as indicated by their formulation of a system of jurisprudence to define the rights of each citizen.²⁰⁸

There is also an allegorical character called German in the original, (and translated as 'Gairman' in the published English versions), who is described as representing "the Earth-brain", an explanation which itself calls for some elucidation, but which is left unexplained. Gairman represents the Giant of Goethe's tale, he is viewed by Steiner as representing atavistic psychic tendencies with their notoriously unreliable and often psychologically unwholesome qualities.²⁰⁹ By contrast, the Youth in Goethe's tale, or Johannes in *Die Pforte* is seen by Steiner as striving towards a modern, wholesome form of extended consciousness. Hence the name 'German', which probably refers to the ancient, past name for the German people, namely, the Germanen, as distinct from the current term, the Deutschen; as such its best English rendering is probably, Teuton.

The seeress Theodora has a major role in this scene, as she has an experience of the Second Coming of Christ. This experience of Theodora provides one of the few moments of the drama in which some dramatic tension occurs. This episode involves an involuntary clairvoyant experience in which she is transported directly into a spiritual vision in which the Second Coming of Christ is experienced as a reality, which is in the process of descending to manifestation on the physical level. This episode is examined in more detail in Section 3B, here it shall just be noted that, already in Scene One of *Die Pforte*, through this Theodora episode, Jesus Christ is brought into association with the process of spirituali-

²⁰⁸Rudolf Steiner, *Geisteswissenschaftliche Menschenkunde*, (Dornach: RSV, 1973), 48; and *Das Johannes Evangelium*, (Dornach: RSV, 1981) lect. 3.

²⁰⁹Steiner, *Goethes geheime Offenbarung*, 218-219.

sation, albeit indirectly. Although this Theodora episode belongs to the expository phase of the plot, and has a major role in the exposition both in terms of dramatic impact and religious-spiritual nuance, it not (overtly) present in the rest of the drama. As shall be noted later, there is however, a subtle integration of this element of the exposition into the rising action.

Towards the end of Scene One, Maria is alarmed when Johannes becomes especially despondent, and asks him for an explanation. He replies that he had become painfully aware of an unethical act he had committed in earlier years. He had deserted a woman who was in love with him; "I had no sense of guilt remaining from the days when I had torn apart the bonds which for the other soul meant life itself ... in that room our teacher said ... earnest words, [these] woke knowledge of the heaviest guilt."²¹⁰

Maria is unable to help him at this stage, and Scene One closes with a dialogue between Johannes and another character, Helena, who proceeds to castigate him for his depressive state. To her, this is a poor response to such a noble quest. Helena insists that only blissful joy can result from an earnest involvement with the path to spiritual development,

(Johannes) "And has this light only brought you joy?"

(Helena) "Not only joy of the kind with which I was already acquainted. But that joy which grows in these words through which the spirit proclaims itself." (Johannes) "Yet I say to you that that which works creatively can also crush." (Helena) "Then an error must be creeping with craftiness into your soul, if that is possible."²¹¹

In this last brief dialogue two features of the process of spiritual development, as understood by Steiner, are presented. Firstly that it

²¹⁰*Pforte*, 54, „Kein Schuldgefühl verblieb in mir aus jenen Tagen, da ich zerriss ein Band, das Leben war der andern Seele ... bedeutsam sprach in jenem Saale vorhin der Führer nun ... in mir ... erzeugte sie Bewußtsein schwerster Schuld ...“

²¹¹*Pforte*, 55, Johannes: „Und dir hat Freude nur dies Licht gebracht?“ Helena: „Nicht Freude nur von jener Art die früher mir bekannt. Doch jene Freude, die in den Worten keimt, durch die der Geist sich selbst verkündet.“ Johannes: „Ich sage dir jedoch, daß auch zermalmen kann, was schaffend wirkt.“ Helena: Es muss ein Irrtum sich mit List in deine Seele schleichen, wenn dies möglich ist.“

is naïve to consider that the dynamics involved in spiritual development do not at some time draw a person into painful and challenging inner confrontations. Further, Helena is described by Steiner in the list of characters, as a representative of influences from “Lucifer”, a being which in Steiner’s worldview is seen as a fallen spirit, but not one which is evil in the full sense. Hence, this type of intellectual immaturity is typical of what Steiner refers to as a “Luciferic” state of mind. The role of manifesting fully evil intentions is assigned to another fallen spirit called “Ahriman”.

In Steiner’s teachings, Lucifer is a being responsible for the existence of naïve and self-centred tendencies in human beings. Lucifer appears on stage in Scene Four; the role of this being in the dramas, and hence in Steiner’s worldview, is examined in the section 3F Here we need to only briefly note that the speech of Helena here implies the view that spiritual beings effect changes in, or at least, influence, human consciousness.

Scene Two

The content of Scene Two occurs for Johannes whilst he is in meditation, and completes the exposition phase of the plot. The leitmotif used for this scene is the maxim inscribed above a Delphic temple, “Know yourself”. This maxim, to which Steiner often referred, was one of seven carved into the vestibule of the temple of Apollo at Delphi.²¹² This phrase is used repeatedly throughout the drama, as the primary admonishing maxim for Johannes. Numerous events portrayed in *Die Pforte* concern non-physical places and beings, which are in fact witnessed by Johannes in his meditations.

The didactic nature of the rhetoric in this regard is striking; of the eleven scenes in *Die Pforte* the events in scenes two, four, six, nine and ten are entirely the contents of Johannes’ meditating, whilst Scene Three is set within a ‘meditation room’. Many of the scenes depict events and meetings between the characters in transcendent realms, of which Johannes has knowledge solely as a direct result of his meditating. No specific details are provided in the stage

²¹²Evi Melas, ed. *Temples and Sanctuaries of Ancient Greece*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 67.

directions or speeches, concerning the meditative practise which Johannes is undertaking.

Johannes, through his meditating upon this maxim, now experiences an episode reminiscent of the so-called 'dark night of the soul' of mystics. He has his first experience of 'self-knowledge', namely of his lower qualities. He becomes aware of a malignant being, which is also an aspect of his own personality. In effect, Johannes encounters his own potential for evil, or his "lower self" as Steiner describes this. This is the culmination of a period of Johannes' life which has been characterized by despondency.

Scene Three

At the beginning of this scene, a character is briefly introduced, a child which has been adopted by Maria. This is the representative of the canary in *Das Märchen*; the child's name is not given, and it only has this minor role in *Die Pforte*. It does not appear again in the drama, although a very brief reference to it is made in Scene Seven. It is in this scene that the rising action of the drama commences, as Johannes undergoes further experiences concerning the nature of the spiritual realities and the efficacy of spiritual beings. Johannes experiences his close friend Maria leaving her body, to enter higher worlds, but in this process, Maria has her body temporarily taken over by a malignant being. Johannes is thus introduced to the reality of malignant beings, and learns that their intention is to undermine the work of their great teacher, Benedictus. In experiencing this event, and in being able to maintain his mental clarity by overcoming his doubts about the integrity of Benedictus and the overall process of esoteric development, Johannes has now gained the right to progress further. The scene ends with a speech made by a 'spirit-voice', affirming that Johannes is attaining towards higher consciousness.

Scene Four

In this scene, the rising action of the plot continues, with however, the action being more concerned with the attainment of spiritual

knowledge, rather than external actions. This is another scene which is to be understood as the content of Johannes' experiences during meditation, in which the two 'fallen' spiritual beings, whom we briefly noted earlier, 'Lucifer' and 'Ahriman', appear. The step towards further knowledge or enlightenment concerning spiritual development concerns the subtle influence of Lucifer and Ahriman on human beings. After these two beings appear, Strader and Capesius come on stage, discovering that they have been transported into a spiritual realm by a mysterious being, the Spirit of the Elements. They discover that the realm where they find themselves, which is possessed of a certain elemental life, vehemently rejects their modern humanistic way of thinking.

They are confronted by the regent of this realm, the Spirit of the Elements, and in the ensuing dialogue every statement by this being is misunderstood by them. The two men realize that their inner life has a direct impact on this elemental realm. These two men are identified in the list of characters as representations of the two "Will-o'-the-Wisps" of the Goethean tale. These are the two characters who, like the Youth, also seek the truth (the Fair Lily), but who, similarly, are intrinsically alien to the realm of the Lily. The list of characters in the published text of the drama informs us that Capesius reflects the qualities assigned to Lucifer, and those of Strader reflect those assigned to Ahriman. The qualities of these fallen beings will be considered later, in Section 3F.

Then an unusual entity makes its appearance, 'the Other Maria' of Scene One; but she is now costumed as a green snake-like woman. This character represents the Green Snake of the Goethean tale, who confronts the two Will-o'-the-Wisps. The Other Maria tells the two men about the two pathways to enlightenment, just as the Green Snake in *Das Märchen* tells of two pathways which the Will-o'-the-Wisps could take to enter the realm of the Fair Lily.

It is obvious from this brief view of the scene, that it contains substantial content. It develops the theme of the two different spiritual sources of ethical imperfections in humans, and it also presents an esoteric ecological perspective in which there is a spiritual milieu linking humans to another realm. Additionally, this scene introduces the pivotal Green Snake theme. We shall note in later scenes, that there is a numerical factor to the thematic element of *Die Pforte*, in particular the number seven is conspicuous. The

fourth episode is the pivotal, central episode in any series of seven, and Scene Four in terms of content and introduction of substantial new thematic elements is a pivotal scene.

Scene Five

In Scene Five, the action continues to build – in the sense of Johannes acquiring further experiential spiritual knowledge. A dialogue between four sage-like characters, the Hierophants, is underway, affirming the need in modern times for some people to undertake spiritual development, and with specific reference to the quest by Johannes for initiation. These four sages have a parallel in the Goethean tale, namely, the four kings who carry out various conversations with the Green Snake, once her luminosity has given her the ability to see them. Steiner views three of these kings as an allegorical depiction of the mind's capacity for spirituality, whilst the fourth relates to the negative potential in human nature. In his *Theosophie*, Steiner maintains that the soul consists of three specific dynamics, the power of thought, of emotion and of volition. Similarly, he maintains there that the human spirit has a triune nature, and that the spiritualization of the soul is a process wherein the soul qualities become permeated by one of the three spiritual potentials of the human being. Accordingly, with the term, 'the human spirit', and hence spirituality, Steiner makes a distinction from 'soul'; maintaining that our spirit derives from the realm of the Platonic Idea or Devachan, whilst the soul derives its being from what he terms the 'soul world'.

To Steiner, the golden king is the representative of initiation in respect of the capacity for spiritual thought, the silver king is representative of initiation in respect of the capacity for purifying the feelings or objective emotionality, and the brass²¹³ king is the

²¹³Goethe uses the term, "Erz" for the third king, which is an ambiguous term, but the copper alloy, brass, is probably intended, however it could be 'iron', if the classical Ages human history of antiquity were being referred to; these were known as the gold, silver and iron Ages.

representative of initiation regarding the will's capacity for knowledge.²¹⁴

Thus in this scene of *Die Pforte*, Johannes' spirituality is considered with specific reference to his triune mental capacity. This figuring of human consciousness as triune features strongly in Steiner's view of human nature, it was elaborated already as a basic factor of human nature in his first Theosophical text from 1904, *Theosophie. Einführung in übersinnliche Welterkenntnis und Menschenbestimmung* (*Theosophy: an introduction to suprasensible knowledge of the world and the destination of humanity*).

In Scene Five, Benedictus, (the golden king), who represents higher spiritual wisdom, declares that Johannes "has passed through the trials of suffering and has in bitter distress laid the foundation for consecration, which is to bring him [spiritual] knowledge."²¹⁵ Theodosius, (the silver king), who represents the power of love, declares that warmth is now flowing into Johannes' heart, and that "He shall realize how he draws near to the cosmic spirit, by giving up the illusion of his self-bound life." The third of the sage-kings, Romanus (the brass king), who represents the will (volition) speaks, declaring that, "thus shall this power lead him through the boundaries of space and the ends of time ..."²¹⁶

The fourth king, Retardus, is a negative figure, as his name indicates, he seeks to hold up the process of Johannes' initiation. He dialogues with the other three, pointing out that he shall endeavour to prevent them bringing illumination to Johannes. Retardus declares that he is so permitted, "As long as yet no mortals have come unto this place, who uninitiated, can set the spirit free from

²¹⁴Rudolf Steiner, *Wo und wie findet man den Geist?*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1961), 64, „Der goldene König ist Repräsentant der Einweihung für das Vorstellungsvermögen, der silberne König ist der Repräsentant für die Einweihung mit dem Erkenntnisvermögen des objektiven Gefühls, der eherne König ist der Repräsentant der Einweihung für das Erkenntnisvermögen des Willens.“

²¹⁵*Pforte*, 89, „Er ist geschritten durch die Leidensproben und hat in bittrer Seelennot den Grund gelegt zur Weihe, die ihm Erkenntnis geben soll.“

²¹⁶*Pforte*, 89-90, „Theodosius: Er soll begreifen wie er dem Weltengeist sich naht durch Opferung des Wahnes seiner Eigenheit. Romanus: So soll die Kraft ihn führen durch Raumesgrenzen und Zeitenende.“

sense reality, then so long am I permitted to curb your eagerness."²¹⁷ Retardus is thus seen to have a justified position in the cosmic order of things, a role similar to that of Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust*, who appears before the Lord, and dialogues about the moral condition of humanity, and in particular, Dr. Faust.

Scene Six

Scene Six is another scene which is to be understood as the content of Johannes' experiences during meditation. It is a very brief scene, contributing further to the rising action, bringing in the factor of the interrelatedness of humanity with the surrounding spiritual realms. It concerns the indebtedness of humanity to the realms of the element powers behind nature. Felicia Balde is required by the ruler of the nature spirits, the Spirit of the Elements, to tell a fairy story to the living, elemental realm in general. This same theme occurs in the Goethean tale, where the Old Woman has to pay the Ferryman a debt. Felicia does this because, as this spirit-being explains, a debt is owed by humanity to the hosts of elemental beings who maintain the life-forces which sustain the natural world.

Felicia accordingly tells a story which is evidently heard by them. It is about the presence of love and hate in human life, and that these are observed by spiritual beings. But in particular, it is about the act of selfless compassion by such an observing spirit being, to assist an elderly human. As such, Felicia's fairy tale is a polar opposite of the fairy tales which, relating the adventures of strange fairy folk, delight human children; the perspective taken here is that of spirits observing the basic psychological dynamics of human existence as a strange and puzzling reality.

²¹⁷Pforte, 92, „So lange nicht betreten haben den Raum, in welchem wir beraten, die Wesen, die noch ungeweiht den Geist entbinden können aus Sinnes-Wirklichkeiten, so lange bleibt mir's unbenommen, zu hemmen euren Eifer.“

Scene Seven

The setting of this scene is described as “the realm of the spirit”, it is a long scene which forms the climax of the drama, and its focus is substantial. The focus is on the three powers at work in the spiritualizing of Johannes’ triune soul, who is now gaining ‘karmic insight’, that is, knowledge of his and Maria’s past life. The former theme is paralleled in Goethe’s tale by the activity of the three handmaidens of the Fair Lily, who generally assist her as maids-in-waiting. In *Die Pforte* these three characters are called Philia, Astrid and Luna. They have spoken only briefly in earlier scenes, but in the seventh scene, the focus is on their role in helping to metamorphose a particular strand of Johannes’ consciousness into a higher mode of existence. Their speeches will be examined later, in Section 3I. The second theme, reincarnation, is presented by another character from Scene One, Theodora, the psychic woman. It involves a remarkable vision of hers, in which she sees the form of Maria’s past incarnation appear from her brow in a vision,

I am impelled to speak. Out of your brow Maria springs forth a shining light ... I look into long vanished times. The holy man, whose form ascended from your head – from his eyes there streams forth the purest soul peace, and a depth of feeling shines forth from his noble features
...²¹⁸

This event evidently occurs in the realm of the Platonic Ideas, as Steiner views these past life thought-forms, perceptible only to the seer, as existing in this realm.²¹⁹ Maria encourages Johannes to keep in mind all that he has learnt, and Benedictus closes the scene by invoking a blessing for Johannes’ further progress.

²¹⁸*Pforte*, 113, „Es drängt zum sprechen (sic!) mich. Aus deiner Stirn, Maria, entsteigt ein Lichtesschein ... Ich schau in lang entschwundene Zeit. Und jener fromme Mann, der deinem Haupt entstieg ist, er strahlt aus seinen Augen die reinste Seelenruhe, und Innigkeit erglimmt aus seinen edlen Zügen.“

²¹⁹Rudolf Steiner, *Vor dem Tore der Theosophie*, (Dornach: RSV, 1978), lecture 4.

The Interlude

In the Interlude, which forms a transition from the climax to the falling action, Sophia and Estella meet again and discuss the merits of artistic performances, in this instance, that of dramatic productions. We are now informed that the foregoing scenes of *Die Pforte* are the play which Sophia has been attending, while her friend Estella, has attended the performance of "*The Disinherited of Body and Soul*". Estella's play is described by her as a gripping, emotional portrayal of the tragic circumstances of an artist, who deserts his girl-friend, to pursue his art,

This caused him to neglect, more and more, a poor girl who had been faithfully devoted to him ... and who finally, dies of grief ... in such a life situation the young woman he had forsaken began to haunt his memory ... without a single ray of hope, he ended in utter despair.²²⁰

It is obvious to the audience of *Die Pforte*, that the artist in the play seen by Estella is placed in the same life circumstances as those of Johannes in *Die Pforte*. But the play, "*The Disinherited of Body and Soul*", stops at the purely human dilemma, and has no inclusion of spiritual dynamics. The two friends then engage in a discussion, in which Estella disagrees with Sophia's perspective that art can only be satisfactory if it attempts to portray the spiritual reality 'behind' the human dilemma and the sense perceptible.

Scene Eight

Scene Eight returns to the setting of Scene One, some three years on, wherein Johannes is painting at an easel, in the presence of Capesius and Strader. Here the falling or consolidating action of the plot includes the tentative steps towards the spiritual path, (on which Johannes has made such progress), by these two men. Thus

²²⁰*Pforte*, 121, „Dadurch vernachlässigte er immer mehr ein armes Geschöpf, das ihm in Treue ergeben war und das schließlich aus Gram starb ... in solcher Lebenslage kam ihm auch wieder seine arme Verlassene in den Sinn ... Ohne Aussicht auf irgendeinen Lichtpunkt siechte er dahin.“

in addition to the falling action of this scene there is also a rising action (suitable for elaboration in a subsequent drama by Steiner), in which the further efforts of these two men in the area of spirituality could be explored. Johannes has regained his equilibrium, and is making real headway with his artwork. As Capesius notes, "This picture truly is for me a wonder, and yet a greater one is its creator. The change which occurred in you is unlike anything which men like me have until now held possible."²²¹ This improved situation of Johannes represents a paradigm central to Steiner's cosmology, wherein the evolution of human beings occurs in a specific rhythm of time, a point which will be considered further in Section 3K.

Scene Nine

Scene Nine further consolidates the thematic aspects of the plot, and again the number seven has a role; for just as seven scenes earlier, Johannes is again in meditation, where he had first heard the Delphic maxim resound. Johannes now hears the Delphic maxim, "Know yourself", again, but it no longer admonishes, for it now uplifts and affirms him, it resonates again and again from the living elemental environment itself. It brings about an inspiring experience, which manifests to him his real spiritual potential. His time of catharsis now results in an enhanced moral-ethical nature, his conscience is again strengthened, leading him to resolve to make amends to his earlier partner, for the tragic circumstances she endured. The implication of this numerological cycle of seven will be considered in Section 3K.

Soon thereafter, he has a glimpse of his true spiritual self, and senses how his consciousness is ascending into spiritual heights, "I feel now how my thinking penetrates deep hidden grounds of worlds, and how its radiant light illumines them. Such is the

²²¹*Pforte*, 126, „Dies Bild ist mir ein Wunder wahrlich. Und noch größ' res ist mir sein Schöpfer. Die Wandlung, die in euch geschehn, es kann ihr nichts verglichen werden, was Menschen meiner Art bisher für möglich hielten.“

germinating power of these words, "O man, know yourself."²²² In the expression 'deep hidden grounds of worlds' the allusion here is to the Platonic realm of Ideas, a major theme in Steiner's comment on Goethe, and in *Die Pforte*.

Scene Ten

Scene Ten shows Johannes once again in meditation, and in preparation for the final phase of Johannes' spiritual development. This scene incorporates an element essential to the exposition of the difficulties within the initiatory process, namely, Johannes' imperfections and merely nascent capacity for reliable spiritual observation. In his meditative state, Johannes encounters approvingly, a tempting and flattering spiritual being, soon thereafter he seems to sense, with dread, the approach of an evil being, but in fact it is his great teacher, Benedictus, whom he then encounters. Soon after this, both Lucifer and Ahriman appear and address him. These actions all demonstrate the continued presence in Johannes of unwise and self-centred influences. The implications of this scene are considered further in Section 3L. Finally, the scene ends with a 'spirit-voice' indicating future success of Johannes, heralding the ascent of his consciousness to the Platonic realm of the Ideas.

Scene Eleven

In Scene Eleven the denouement of the initiatory process is presented, but yet in this scene, too, the future possibilities of Capesius and Strader are incorporated, giving scene eleven the character of an expository scene, with regard to the sub-plot, namely the future quest for spirituality by Capesius and Strader. Most of the characters of Scene One are gathered in a sacred temple, where the spiritual achievement of Johannes is confirmed by Maria. This parallels the final episode in the Goethean tale, wherein the Fair

²²²*Pforte*, 137, „Ich fühle wie mein Denken dringt in tief verborgne Weltengründe; und wie es leuchtend sie durchstrahlt. So wirkt die Keimkraft dieses Wortes: O Mensch, erlebe dich!“

Lily embraces the now empowered and jubilant Prince, in a temple. However, in the final minutes of the scene the future potential of Capesius and Strader are the focus, Benedictus declares that Capesius shall find the way forwards, and Theodora prophesises that Strader shall win through to the light. In Section 3M the details of this scene are considered.

In summary, although *Die Pforte* is conceived as a mystery drama, in the ancient sense of depicting the interaction between the human and divine realities, there is a major sociological difference between Steiner's dramatic efforts and the ancient Mysteries. In ancient times, rituals carried out in Eleusis and elsewhere, took place in seclusion, the acolytes gathered in secluded Mystery centres, separated from the general community. Whereas Steiner's drama seeks to depict a path of esoteric-spiritual development in the contemporary world, for people whose life circumstances are placed within the technological-industrialized world, and who remain actively living and working within this social context. It is also presupposed that the audience has considerable knowledge of Steiner's anthroposophical views, as without this, much that occurs in the drama is especially dense. As the drama takes about seven hours to perform, not all of its minor themes and their parallel in Goethe's tale, can be considered in this study, however each scene shall now be considered in some detail.