

## 4: THE PRIMARY FEATURES OF STEINER'S ANTHROPOLOGY EXPRESSED IN *DIE PFORTE*

**4A: The dramatic elements of *Das Märchen* provide the template for *Die Pforte*, but these are adapted for didactic purposes, with regard to Steiner's esoteric worldview**

Steiner's drama, *Die Pforte*, develops its characters by presenting their responses to the demands of the spiritual quest, and to the dynamics inherent by other characters. In *Die Pforte*, the dramatic action derives primarily from responses to spiritual realities taking place within the characters' minds, rather than from earthly occurrences. In this way, the path to spiritual development as elucidated by Steiner is presented in a personalized context. Although there is character delineation in *Die Pforte*, the use of allegorical characters remains important for the presentation of processes involved in spiritual development. These include characters who represent elements of consciousness, and characters who are spiritual beings, both good and evil. All of these characters, and their experiences, serve to illustrate the typical range of problems and challenges and triumphs which a modern person – that is, a student of Steiner – may expect to undergo if they seek to develop their spirituality. The rhetoric of *Die Pforte* is designed to serve the purpose of character delineation as well as to integrate his message of spiritual development with his view of Goethe's fairy tale. To achieve this, Steiner has to devote attention to the prosody of the drama.

In considering the parallelism which exists between *Das Märchen* and *Die Pforte* in the preceding sections, we noted that this was specifically mentioned by Steiner in his original drafts for *Die Pforte*. This parallelism is to be seen in the duplication in Steiner's drama of all the characters of the Goethean tale. However, the parallelism is not a binding criterion for Steiner. He felt free to deviate from this, for example there are several characters in *Die Pforte* who are not in *Das Märchen*, among these are Ahriman and Lucifer, and the human representative of Lucifer, Helena, and also a character called 'the Earth-brain'. These additional characters serve to assist in Steiner's dramatization of the quest for union with the higher self. Ahriman and Lucifer are spiritual beings, whose

influences are manifested by Capesius and Strader. It is clear that these two characters portray Steiner's anthroposophical view that unethical qualities or unwise attitudes, derive from not one, but two, powers of evil. One of these powers is not fully evil, it tends towards the exacerbating of unrealistic attitudes and conceit.

The two people in the Prelude and Interlude, Estella and Sophia, are additional to the characters in the Goethean tale. These two enable Steiner to delineate a cultural context and to thereby demonstrate his view of the societal significance of the esoteric-religious life. However, where characters in *Die Pforte* do represent Goethean counterparts, the similarity between these is strongly maintained in their allegorical function, as understood by Steiner. In this study, we have noted, where necessary, the similarity and dissimilarities of the characters in these two works. But a brief review of the degree of parallelism is needed before we consider the adaptation of the dramatic elements of the Goethean tale in Steiner's drama.

In Goethe's tale, the Will-o'-the-Wisps are creatures intrinsically disharmonious to the magical environment and its inhabitants; they strongly arouse the ire of the Ferryman, and deport themselves in a haughty manner before the Green Snake. In *Die Pforte*, as we have noted, they are represented by Capesius and Strader, who bring forth the same ire in the Spirit of the Elements in the magical elemental realm. They also spurn, and are puzzled by, the Other Maria (the Green Snake), just as the two Wisps were puzzled by the Green Snake, and also spurned its suggestion of a pathway to the realm of the Lily. The Spirit of the Elements is the representative of the Ferryman who, in the Steiner model, ferries the two Wisps into the realm of the Earth. The Spirit of the Elements likewise ferries souls into incarnation. He 'ferries' Capesius and Strader into his realm, and their incompatibility with the realm becomes evident.

The Other Maria is representative of the Green Snake, which Steiner sees as a quality of selflessness. In her first speech in Scene One, she refers to her devotion to other people, "An inner urge has guided me to dedicate the rest of my life to those whose destiny has

brought them suffering and need.”<sup>348</sup> As one of the persons who attend the esoteric lectures, she testifies to the empowering quality of anthroposophical truths as the vivifying source of her nature, “...I see their truth, when, full of life, they give me life ... daily they create myself anew for me.”<sup>349</sup> Here Steiner’s dramatized adaptation of Goethe’s tale allows the audience to learn that the source of the key soul quality needed for the spiritual quest, is to be found in the renewed Mystery wisdom, which is present in anthroposophical teachings.

The Other Maria also appears in a metamorphosed form, as a snake-like character in Scene Four, and thus becomes a direct parallel to the Green Snake. The Green Snake tells the Will-o’-the-Wisps of two pathways to the realm of the Lily, whereas the Other Maria points out to the two men that there are two ways to find their way to truth. This parallelism between the characters in both literary works is also reflected in the character of Johannes with respect to the Youth. In the Goethean tale, the Youth is seeking union with the fair Lily, but he appears in a depressed state, “With bare feet he walked resignedly over the hot sand, and a deep pain appeared to numb all external sense-impressions.”<sup>350</sup> Similarly in *Die Pforte*, Johannes, as the human being in the discontented, early stages of the spiritual quest, states, “I feel as if the earlier soul-fire has disappeared, and my eyes gaze unmoved upon the splendour that the sunlight spreads over all things.”<sup>351</sup> Meanwhile Maria, like the Lily is lamenting her fate, waiting a better time.

It is the unrequited yearnings of the Youth for the Lily which has brought him into this state, and the reader is informed that a worse

---

<sup>348</sup> *Pforte*, 46, „Mich hat ein innerer Trieb gelenkt; den Rest des Lebens, der mir noch zugeteilt, zu widmen jenen Menschen die des Geschickes Lauf gebracht in Elend und in Not ...“

<sup>349</sup> *Pforte*, 47, „Ich schaue ihre Wahrheit, wenn lebend Leben sie mir spenden ... und deutlich seh’ ich jeden Tag, ... täglich sie mich neu mir selber schaffen.“

<sup>350</sup> *Das Märchen*, 220, „Mit nackten Sohlen ging er gelassen über den heißen Sand hin, und ein tiefer Schmerz schien alle äußeren Eindrücke abzustumpfen.“

<sup>351</sup> *Pforte*, 22, „Ich fühle wie verschwunden der Seele früh’res Feuer und stumpf nur schaut mein Auge den Glanz der Dinge, den Sonnenlicht verbreitet über sie.“

fate would await the Youth if he attempted to touch her, for such an act would be almost fatal. In Scene One of *Die Pforte*, Johannes is shown as suffering from a despondent, disinterested condition, and Maria is distressed about this. This same dynamic in the Goethean tale is somewhat more dramatically portrayed than in *Die Pforte*. The Prince actually does vehemently rush forward, touching the fair Lily and consequently falls to the ground, as if dead, and the Lily is then deeply distressed: “ ... if thy touch kills, I will die at thy hand” ... consciousness fled from him, and with a cry she stepped back, and the fair youth sank soulless from her arms to the ground.”

The Lily is thereupon very distraught, “ ... the sweet Lily stood motionless and gazed numbly at the [apparently] soulless corpse. Her heart seemed to have stopped beating in her breast ...”<sup>352</sup> As was noted earlier, Johannes’ despondent condition is to some extent due to the impasse in his yearnings for a relationship with Maria. A major deviation from the parallelism occurs in *Die Pforte* here, because Johannes does not fall into a coma-like state. If *Die Pforte* is to illustrate in human terms, the responses to the trials in the way to spirituality, then Johannes must remain conscious, to be able to interact with others, and to thus progress on his quest.

The fair Lily’s condition of ‘searing the soul’, so to speak, of the person who is too eager for higher attainment, and of having her own self tentatively impaired by the impact of the eager seeker, are two themes which are taken up in *Die Pforte*. The first theme is prominent, being reflected in the struggles which Johannes has to undergo, whereas the second theme is a minor theme, and feels somewhat artificial in *Die Pforte*. In Goethe’s tale, the Lily’s delicate canary is harmed by the Youth’s impetuous hawk. In *Die Pforte*, Maria’s adopted child has developed a negative attitude towards her, after Theodora prophesied in its presence, causing some mild trauma. The child remains a representation of the Goethean canary, being introduced only briefly in Scene Three, to

---

<sup>352</sup>*Das Märchen*, 228, „ ... wenn deine Berührung tötet, so will ich von deinen Händen sterben.“ ... das Bewußtsein verließ ihn, und mit einem Schrei trat sie zurück, und der holde Jüngling sank entseelt aus ihrem Armen zur Erde. Die süße Lilie stand unbeweglich und blickte starr nach dem entseelten Leichnam. Das Herz schien ihr im Busen zu stocken ... “

maintain the parallelism with *Das Märchen*, and never appears again in the drama.

In the Goethean tale, The Old Man with the Lamp facilitates the search for the Lily, acting as a catalyst in the dialogue between the Green Snake and the three Kings. In *Die Pforte* he is represented by the wise Felix Balde, who supports Johannes by declaring that such yearnings for spirituality as Johannes is experiencing, is valuable for the spiritual beings who guide human evolution. Felix assists Johannes' quest by mediating in the conversation with the three hierophants in a subterranean temple. This correlates to the episode of the Goethean tale, wherein the Old Man's dialogue with the three Kings takes place in an underground cavern. The correspondence of the three kings to the triune human spirit in Steiner's worldview has already been discussed. As we noted earlier, Benedictus correlates to the Golden King, Theodosius and Romanus to the Silver and Brass Kings. We have noted too, the correlation of the Mixed King to Retardus. Retardus is in effect, representative of negative spiritual influences active within the illusory personality, influences that derive from Lucifer and Ahriman. At the end of the Goethean tale, the Mixed King collapses into a heap, whilst in close parallelism to Goethean tale, Retardus in *Die Pforte* loses his power over Johannes and Maria.

The character 'German' (Gairman or better, Teutonus) in *Die Pforte*, as noted in Section 4H, is representative of the Giant in Goethe's tale, and in Steiner's view, is an allegory for atavistic, psychic faculties. Hence Gairman, like the Giant, has only a minor role in the drama, giving two speeches, and serving to remind the audience that there is a negative element in human nature which is antagonistic to the conscious efforts towards spirituality. Similarly, the Giant appears twice in the Goethean tale, and opposes the efforts of other characters. Finally, the three serving maidens of the Lily are represented by the three women, Philia, Luna and Astrid, and they are active as intermediaries between the soul and the ether world.

*Die Pforte* is then a dramatized version, with some major adaptations, of the Goethean tale, itself conceived of by Steiner as an allegorical description of the Rosicrucian path to spiritual development. There are however, elements that Steiner has placed in *Die Pforte* which have no parallel in *Das Märchen*. We have

noted the striking inclusion of a Christian eschatological element through Theodora, and also how there is a dynamic interaction encompassing all the various characters in *Die Pforte*. Their different actions and attitudes have a significant impact upon the possibilities for spiritual development by other characters. This was already introduced in Scene One, where we noted that Johannes found his depressive state triggered off by listening to the speeches of the others. This subtle interdependence of one person upon the inner life of others is strongly indicated in Scene Eleven. Here Retardus identifies the factors responsible for success of Johannes as the 'failure' of Capesius and Strader to remain in a Luciferic-Ahri-manic state.

In Scene Four, the representative of the subtle forces behind nature, the Spirit of the Elements, emphasizes repeatedly to Capesius and Strader how their mental life affects the very realm of the nature spirits. In *Die Pforte* nature spirits play a role, speaking or making dramatic noises behind the curtain. These dynamics follow closely Steiner's interpretation of the declaration by the Ferryman in *Das Märchen*, that the River would rise in anger, if the gold coins of the Will-o'-the-Wisps were to fall into it. That is, to Steiner, the River represents an intermediary elemental realm, to which the untruthful or unenlightened attitudes of the imperfect human soul are detrimental. There is, in Steiner's viewpoint here, an allusion to the Pauline statement, concerning the need felt in the spirit to bring about a spiritual renewal of human kind, "We know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." (Rom. 8:22) Steiner views this statement as a reference to the distress the elemental realm experiences due to the 'fallen' condition of the soul of humanity.<sup>353</sup>

However, the parallelism between the two literary works is significantly altered with regard to the Green Snake and her equivalent, the Other Maria. In *Das Märchen* the Green Snake has a pivotal role, and her actions are dramatic, especially towards the expository phase, where her decision to become a bridge by self-sacrifice enables the union of the Youth and the Lily. In Steiner's view, Goethe's tale portrays the path to initiation or high spiritual

---

<sup>353</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Die geistigen Wesenheiten in den Himmelskörpern und Naturreichen*, (Dornach: RSV, 1974), lect. 9.

attainment, in an allegorical form. The episodes that portray this process in *Das Märchen* flow in powerful, evocative imagery, and dramatic moments, in the usual sense of the term, are numerous. For example, at the commencement of the tale the angry admonitions of the ferryman to his two passengers is striking, "The boat is heeling, if you don't be still, it will capsize ... !" Later on, the Green Snake's encounter with the statues of the kings, and their sudden breaking into dialogue is a gripping scene, which ends with a highly dramatic exiting of the Old Man and the Green Snake through the solid walls of the cavern. The following episodes in the tale all maintain the dramatic tension and magical ambience of the tale, culminating in the thunderous ascent of the underground temple to the Earth's surface. This dramatic quality is not present in *Die Pforte*.

The primary theme in the Goethean tale, as Steiner views it, is the quest for the higher self, but portrayed through allegory, hence no specific individual is involved. As noted earlier, in Steiner's interpretation, many of the characters in *Das Märchen* are aspects of the Youth; the Lily is his higher self, the Old Woman is his core soul qualities, the three kings are his triune spiritual qualities. The Mixed King is his hidden lower self, the Hawk is his premature egocentric eagerness for spirituality, the Green Snake is his innate potential for selflessness, the two Will-o'-the-Wisps represent his Luciferic and Ahrimanic tendencies.

In *Die Pforte*, the principal theme is still the quest for the higher self, exemplified in parallel with the Goethean portrayal. However in Steiner's drama the quest is portrayed as undertaken by several people, whose personalities are delineated, in order that the audience may learn about the emotive and intellectual issues which arise in the soul of a person who is seeking to rise above their current personality and assimilate eternal truths into their life, with the consequent changes in outlook that this will bring. The use of allegorical characters in *Die Pforte* is therefore minimal. *Die Pforte* follows the struggles of Johannes Thomasius, in particular, but the quest for the spirit by Capesius and Strader, is also present as a subplot; so too, are the final challenges for Maria.

There are some allegorical characters in *Die Pforte*; for example, Philia, Astrid and Luna, who represent aspects of Maria's soul. Additionally, we noted there is 'Gairman' who represents the

mysterious 'spirit of the Earth-brain', a term, which in keeping with Steiner's intention to create a Mystery drama, with cryptic content, remains unexplained. However, since the primary theme is the struggle towards the spirit by people in a contemporary setting, the dramatic tension in *Die Pforte* is in effect limited to the inner struggles and experiences on the threshold between this world and the next, by Johannes, and to a lesser extent, by other souls.

In Goethe's tale, the dramatic tension and the crucial points in the narrative depend upon the Youth faithfully following his inner knowing of the Lily's existence, (this is seen by Steiner as arising from the memory of the spiritual realms, still vaguely present after birth). In addition, the sacrifice of the Green Snake is also a pivotal factor, although this is a less prominent element, until the actual moment arrives. Once selflessness and the will to transformation of the personal egocentric self has been born, the Youth can unite with the Lily. This is presented in the sacrifice of the Green Snake.

We noted in the preceding section that the role of the Other Maria, as the representative of the Green Snake, is diminished in *Die Pforte*. In Scene One, her speech embodies and discretely advocates humility, and in Scene Four her speech provides a contrast between the materialistic or humanistic attitudes to those of the esoteric-spiritual. She is then absent until Scene Eleven, where her speeches are merely affirmative of what Johannes and Maria have achieved. The reason for her lesser role is connected with the purpose of this drama, namely a didactic presentation of the demands made upon the person who in modern times seeks the Mysteries, or spiritual development. *Die Pforte* needs to portray the challenges met by a seeker in a personal manner, hence it is important that Johannes (and to a lesser extent Strader and Capesius) are seen to portray the personal struggle to become spiritualized and selfless. Their speeches and actions have to embody what the Other Maria represents.

Hence in *Die Pforte*, Johannes, as a real individual, has to follow a complex and very personal path in which his triune mental qualities are constantly tested and refined. Firstly, his activities, and the success or failure of these, are linked to the actions of others, in particular, how much integrity these people have. Secondly, Johannes has to spiritualize his consciousness, his specific triune mental qualities, to attain to a functional state beyond the threshold. This



process requires in the first instance, the absorption of the anthroposophical wisdom, namely, the lectures to which Johannes and his friends are going.

This need to demonstrate the personal, human element in the quest for spiritual development is made possible through the diminished role of the Other Maria. For example, in *Das Märchen*, the Green Snake becomes luminous and consequently is placed in a position of being able to perceive the three noble kings and the unpleasant Mixed King. In *Die Pforte*, Johannes encounters firstly the ignoble 'double' of himself, and then later, the three great hierophants, only after he has developed a more enlightened, or 'illuminated' quality, through his stimulated conscience. This leads to his acknowledgment of his lower self, finally resulting in an enhanced integrity.

In addition, Johannes has also attained to more integrity through his having garnered greater understanding of the spiritual realities through his more engaged approach to earthly life. But, as was noted in Section 3B and 3C, for this to occur, Johannes needs to have the efficacy of his conscience enhanced. However, for this he in turn requires, in a striking deviation from the Goethean tale, a remarkable process as a catalyst, to give an impetus towards his high ethical insights. As we noted earlier, this impetus is provided from the Risen Christ, whom Theodora announces.

The intention of Steiner to depict in *Die Pforte* in personal terms, the responses in the inner life of people to the challenges of the spiritual path, tones down the dramatic elements of *Das Märchen*, and creates a more introspective or subtle dramatic element. The social milieu of Johannes is presented in Scene One, and he testifies to its effect on him, revealing that, "All former fire has disappeared from my soul." This is due to his problems concerning his relationship with Maria. Later in the scene, after Theodora has a vision of the Second Coming, his despondency deepens, "First came our leader's words, and then what all these people said – now I feel shattered to the core." The dramatic quality becomes a little more overt in Scene Two when he encounters his lower self, and also in Scene Three when Maria's body is used by a malignant being, this event is revealed to the audience through a very long speech by Benedictus.

In Scene Four where there could have been a strongly overt dramatic element, through the appearance of Lucifer and Ahriman, this is muted by these two beings declaring their essential nature, as if letting it resonate from them in a somewhat archetypal manner, rather than directly confronting Johannes. However the spiritual-epistemological or introspective dramatic tension here is quite powerful, in that Johannes identifies these two powers as intimately associated with earthly life, Lucifer being the tempter within, and Ahriman casting an illusion over sensory perception. These are the two main battlefields for the acolyte towards initiation, the soul nature, which needs spiritualizing, and the hollowed-out, material sense perceptible, 'behind' which reality, the Platonic Goethean Idea, is veiled.

In Scene Four the dialogue between the Spirit of the Elements and the two men includes some dramatic elements. The audience witnesses the lightning-like flashes, and the thunderous noises produced by the elemental forces, angered by the comments of Capesius and Strader. However, the following scenes – Scenes Five to Scene Nine – continue the inner development challenges of Johannes, without any dramatic episodes. The audience experiences much less dramatic content than a direct dramatization of *Das Märchen* would yield. The dramatic content in these scenes of *Die Pforte* is only to be found in becoming absorbed in the existential implication of esoteric truths for Johannes (and others), and in the subtle dynamics underlying spiritualization.

In Scene Ten Johannes' inability to distinguish truth from error in the use of higher faculties is the major theme. This episode is a matter of considerable subtle dramatic tension in terms of his struggle for spirituality. It is portrayed with some dramatic elements on stage. Scene Eleven is entirely a dialogue about the stages of spirituality attained by the main characters, without any surprising or dramatic incidents. Since the intention is to carefully portray the individual person's journey so far, the dramatic element is again only to be found in the consciousness processes elaborated in the various speeches.

A departure from the Goethean tale occurs in the last scene of *Die Pforte*, because although the primary emphasis is on the spiritual attainment of Johannes, a secondary emphasis falls on the future possibilities of Strader and Capesius, whose parallels in the

Goethean tale are the two Will-o'-the-Wisps. In *Das Märchen*, these two characters fade out some time before the union of the Prince and the Fair Lily. Although at the end of the text, the narrator does make a suggestion that perhaps it is they who have caused some further gold pieces to clinker down into the new, reformed word, over which the now united Prince and Fair Lily rule. The suggestion is that the dynamic which was encountered at the beginning of the tale – two negative characters as an essential element in the quest to cross the river – does continue on, perpetually, as an intrinsic and constant dynamic in the human world. But in *Die Pforte* the Will-o'-the-Wisps are not static characters, representing a constant factor in human consciousness, they have become specific individuals. They both are told that they may look forward to a future in which they will succeed on the path to spiritual renewal.

We have seen already in Section 1 and Section 2, that to Steiner the attainment of spiritual thinking, that is, conscious functioning in the Platonic realm of the Idea, is the height of spiritual attainment. In *Die Pforte* the primacy of the 'realm of Ideas' is reflected in its role as the goal of initiatory consciousness, and as the realm in which is found the source of all created, structured reality. The spirit chorus at the end of Scene Three affirms this perspective. Hence it can also be concluded that to Steiner the person who achieves this state has also developed a form of divine or selfless love. This virtue is traditionally associated in religious texts, with nearness to God. But, in *Die Pforte* there is only one direct mention of the supreme Deity – at least in the accustomed sense. But in an indirect and unorthodox manner, Deity is referred to, through the agency of the 'divine hierarchies'.

A prominent element in Steiner's anthroposophical worldview is the activity of divine spirits, referred to 'hierarchical beings'. Steiner describes the activity of nine ranks of these beings, and equates them with the nine ranks of such beings recorded in the Neo-Platonic texts of the pseudo-Dionysus.<sup>354</sup> It is also a central feature in Steiner's cosmology, that these beings in their creative

---

<sup>354</sup>The primary Neo-platonic text concerning these hierarchies, listing their names, is *The Mystical Theology and the Celestial Hierarchies of Dionysius the Areopagite*, (Fintry, The Shrine of Wisdom, 1965).

activity are an expression of the will of God. These beings exert their efficacy through the sevenfold evolutionary cycles whose dynamics, as we saw earlier, are directly reflected in the structure of *Die Pforte*. Steiner has adapted the dramatic elements of *Das Märchen* to indicate that the realm of the Idea is closely associated with these 'divine-spiritual' beings. An additional feature of the seven evolutionary phases is that they are the direct expression of these hierarchical beings. They have brought the universe into being, and created humanity; but in doing this, are revealers or servers of the will of the primal God.<sup>355</sup>

The role of these beings is incorporated into Scene Five, where a variety of such beings are referred to, in a curiously discrete way. In *Das Märchen*, the Youth is united eventually to the fair Lily with the help of the three kings. But in *Die Pforte*, Johannes, the representative of the Youth, becomes united to the spirit – that is accesses the realm of the Idea – through the help of the three hierophants (three kings), who also need these hierarchical beings to ensure that Johannes is successful. When the three hierophants are gathered in the temple, Benedictus requests that Romanus invokes them, to bless the efforts of Johannes towards the goal of divine consciousness. Romanus acquiesces, saying that Johannes shall enter those spheres where spirits act creatively and,

Der Weltenbildner Ziel,  
 Sie werden ihn beleben;  
 Und Urbeginne sollen durchgeistern ihn,  
 Die Weltgewalten werden durchkraften ihn;  
 Die Sphärenmächte durchleuchten ihn;  
 Und Weltenherrscher befeuern ihn,<sup>356</sup>

This passage is a striking example of Steiner's neologistic metaphorical rhetoric, which in the process of describing the influence of these hierarchical spirits creates a somewhat awkward text. The difficulty of understanding such texts is exemplified in the Pusch translation,

---

<sup>355</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Die geistigen Hierarchien und ihre Widerspiegelung in der physischen Welt*, lect. 5, (Dornach: RSV, 1991).

<sup>356</sup>*Pforte*, 91.

The cosmic builders' goals  
shall quicken him with life;  
divine primordial sources bespirit him;  
world-ruling powers grant strength to him  
the might of spheres illumine him,  
and lords of worlds befire him.

In an attempt to render the assumed meaning of the original, the translator has resorted to English verbal neologisms and vague phraseology. What is striking in the German original is that Steiner avoids using the specific names that he has coined for these beings in his own cosmological writings and lectures. He also used the Biblical terms at times, but he created names for these ranks of beings as well. These terms, from the highest rank downwards are, in English translation, the spirits of love, the spirits of the harmonies, the spirits of will, the spirits of wisdom, the spirits of movement, the spirits of form, the spirits of personality, and finally, the archangels, the angels – he uses the Biblical terms for these. Why he refrains from using his own standard terms which are well known to his students, and replaces them with analogous, but unfamiliar, terms is unclear. In Section 2A, however, we saw that some obscurity is a feature of Steiner's rhetoric, and its effect is to make the text less accessible.

In the above speech by Romanus, the 'Urbeginne' (Primal-Beginnings) refers to the spirits of personality, as these are also named in Steiner's writings as 'die Urbeginne'. The 'Weltgewalten' (Powers of the Cosmos) refers to the spirits of form, who are also known as 'die Gewalten'. The expression, 'die Sphärenmächte' (Mights of the Spheres) refers to the spirits of movement, as their alternate name is 'die Mächte.' The term, 'Weltenherrscher' (Rulers of Worlds) refers to the spirits of wisdom, as an alternate name Steiner uses for these is the German Biblical term, 'die Herrschaften', which in English is 'the Dominions'.

This leaves the first name mentioned in this passage, the 'Weltenbildner' (Sculptors of Worlds); this is presumably a reference to the archangels, since the list proceeds in order, from the lower to the higher ranks, and the archangels precede the "Urbeginne". A clearer rendering into English of the passage would now be,

The goals of the Sculptors of Worlds, they shall quicken him,  
And Primal-Beginnings shall permeate him with spirit.  
The Powers of the Cosmos, they shall strengthen him,  
The Might of the Spheres illumine him,  
And Rulers of Worlds enflame him.

In this passage, it is clear that Steiner merges the Platonic concept of the realm of the archetypal Idea with the ancient esoteric doctrine, of specific ranks of divine beings, each with their cosmic sphere and purpose. It has qualities evocative of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and of earlier Gnostic texts, whereas in Plato's *Phaedrus* it is simply stated that 'the gods' exist in the realm of the archetypal Idea. When one notes Steiner's view that these divine-spiritual beings express the intention of God, then the above passage is indicating that Johannes, in seeking to attain to initiation in the context of Steiner's anthroposophical model, shall in effect, be granted access to God.

That the role of God in *Die Pforte* is in effect a discrete one, in that the hierarchies are the revealers of deity, expresses two closely linked didactic intentions of the drama. These are firstly, to allude to the role of the hierarchies as indirectly manifesting God – a theme which is elucidated in many hundreds of Steiner's lectures. Secondly his intention is to allude to his conviction about Natural Theology, that is about the nature of God; and a corollary to this, the relationship of humanity to deity.

We have noted in various places that Steiner refers to (the realm of) the Spirit or (the realm of) God – seen as the origin of all creation – as the *Weltengrund*, that is, the “‘foundational element’ or ‘ground’ of the cosmos. Steiner maintained that God is the ‘Weltengrund’, literally, the ‘ground of the cosmos’, or more appropriately expressed in English, the substratum, or foundational element of the cosmos. This is an expression which is scarcely translatable directly into English. Some examples of Steiner's usage of this phrase includes, “... for in the process of thinking taking hold of the Idea, it merges into the primal foundations of cosmic existence” (*Urgrunde des Weltendaseins*); and, “All things in the world derive from a primal spiritual foundation of all creation (*geistigen Urgrunde*). The human being, too, initially has its origin from this primal source of all creation (*geistigen Urgrunde*) ...”

His advice to theologians concerning the term, 'God' in the Lord's Prayer reflects his conclusion in this regard, "In the Lord's Prayer one should be thinking of the Foundation of the Cosmos (Weltengrund). In the Lord's Prayer, the first sentence does not actually refer to the later development, but to the beginning."<sup>357</sup> The impersonal and indefinable qualities which Steiner sees in God implies its own corollary, namely that specific hierarchical entities are needed to interact with a definable created cosmos, and to form a link to humanity. There is still a link in Steiner's worldview between the uncaused primal God – the foundational element of the cosmos – and human beings, but it is especially subtle. In his early epistemological text, "*Grundlinien einer Erkenntnistheorie der Goetheschen Weltanschauung, mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Schiller. (Outlines of a theory of epistemology of the Goethean worldview with especial reference to Schiller)*" he writes,

God (Weltengrund) has fully poured out Himself into the cosmos; He has not withdrawn from it in order to guide it from outside. Rather He impels it from within, He has not withheld Himself from it. The highest mode of His manifestation within the reality of normal existence is (human) thinking and through this factor, the human personality. Thus if God has goals, then they are identical with the goals that human beings set themselves, as He lives within these. But this does not occur through the human being trying to investigate one or other command of the Regent of the cosmos, and acting according to such a goal. It occurs through the human being acting from his or her own understanding. For within these is living this Regent of the cosmos. He does not exist as Will somewhere outside of the human being; for he has forgone such a will of his own, in order to make everything dependent upon the will of the human being.<sup>358</sup>

---

<sup>357</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Vorträge und Kurse über Christlich-Religiöses Wirken*, (Dornach: RSV, 1993), 631, „Im Vaterunser hat man zu denken an den Weltengrund. Im Vaterunser bezieht eigentlich der erste Satz sich nun nicht auf das spätere Werden, sondern auf den Anfang, auf den Ursprung.“

<sup>358</sup>*Grundlinien einer Erkenntnistheorie*, in *Die menschliche Freiheit*, 124-129, „Der Weltengrund hat sich in die Welt vollständig ausgegossen; er hat sich nicht von der Welt zurückgezogen, um sie von außen zu lenken, er treibt sie von innen; er hat sich ihr nicht vorenthalten. Die höchste Form, in der er innerhalb der Wirklichkeit des gewöhnlichen

This conception of deity is close to panentheism, in which God has some of the attributes of pantheism, as well as some of those of theism. The ‘foundation of the cosmos’ exerts its efficacy discretely in the evolving consciousness of human beings. This quasi-panentheistic viewpoint is affirmed in *Die Pforte* by Maria, “... der Geist, der uns beseelt, verbindet innig sich mit allem, was in den Lebensgründen des Menschen Schicksal spinnt (the spirit who ensouls us, unites itself intimately with all that which, in the foundations of human life, spins human fate.)”<sup>359</sup>

Steiner’s conception of Deity here obviously exposes the ongoing evolutionary future of human destiny to the vagaries of human consciousness processes.<sup>360</sup> However, it is the case in the above text, that any such dependency is linked to the human volitional power, not the intellect as such. To Steiner the will or volition is an element of the soul-life of human beings that has a deeper, more vital link to deity than the intellect, even though much of the will is seen to lie in the unconscious sphere of the human mind. This subject will be considered in more detail in Section 4D.

Steiner’s view of God in effect refutes the concept of God as ‘almighty’. In various cosmological writings and lectures Rudolf Steiner describes the process of creation as deriving from this God, but in fact, expressed through these nine ranks of spiritual beings.

---

Lebens auftritt, ist das Denken und mit demselben die menschliche Persönlichkeit. Hat somit der Weltengrund Ziele, so sind sie identisch mit den Zielen, die sich der Mensch setzt, indem er sich darlebt. Nicht indem der Mensch irgendwelchen Geboten des Weltenlenkers nachforscht, handelt er nach dessen Absichten, sondern indem er nach seinen eigenen Einsichten handelt. Denn in ihnen lebt sich jener Weltenlenker dar. Er lebt nicht als Wille irgendwo außerhalb des Menschen; er hat sich jedes Eigenwillens begeben, um alles von des Menschen Willen abhängig zu machen.“

<sup>359</sup>*Pforte*, 48, the reference to ‘spinning fate’ refers to the mythological image of a spindle, upon which the threads of destiny are interwoven by the three Norns or three Fates, an image often used by Steiner to describe karma.

<sup>360</sup>John McQueren, *In search of deity; an essay in dialectical theism*, (London: SCM Press, 1984), 54, “The champions of panentheism hold – rightly, I think – that deism and pantheism are over-simplifications. The being of God, they claim, is both transcendent and immanent, both impassible and passive, both eternal and temporal ...”.



As he writes in his *Die Geheimwissenschaft*, as this process gets underway via the sevenfold evolutionary cycle, the primal evolutionary dynamics therein become the sole arbiter; if a group of beings falls behind in their own evolutionary potential, then from that condition, evil arises. The leaders of the two main groups of such entities are Lucifer and Ahriman. Steiner, in clarifying his teachings, and as a partial explanation of the enigma of evil, maintains strongly the implications of his approach to Natural Theology, namely that God does not have absolute power. In short, to Steiner, God is not “all-mighty”. In a lecture given in 1912, Steiner elucidates three great virtues, associated with deity, namely wisdom, power and love. He explains to his audience that God cannot be all-wise as that would prevent humanity attaining to true freedom, because God can only know all things, if the decisions that are as yet unborn in the human soul were also known in advance.<sup>361</sup>

In *Die Pforte* many substantial adaptations from the Goethean tale are made to accommodate the above view on deity. Lucifer and Ahriman exert a strong influence on both Capesius and Strader, whilst Johannes has to struggle to free himself from their power. Just how they shall perform in the face of such trials is not known in advance to the audience, the power of the divine has to be sought by Johannes and also actively mediated to him, at the request of the three hierophants, via the hierarchies.

The presence of God in the challenges and triumphs of Johannes is fully in the background, externally, that is in terms of his encountering sacred spiritual realities; he sees his higher self, he feels the higher spiritual realms and so on, but he doesn't mention a drawing near to God. However, the presence of God in Johannes's quest, internally, that is in terms of his perception of his spiritualizing inner being, is prominently and precisely defined – if one knows the quasi-panentheistic Natural Theology of Steiner. For in terms of the immanent presence or subtle efficacy of God, arising in the free, that is, independent, soul-life of Johannes, the imprint of God is very clear in a speech he makes in Chapter Nine.

Johannes is now rejoicing in the success of his meditation work, sensing the spiritual spheres around him. He declares that when the

---

<sup>361</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Erfahrungen des Übersinnlichen*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1970), 208.

power of the Delphic maxim – in an adapted version – becomes efficacious, then, “The entire cosmic-being lives in the soul’s being, when such power is established in the spirit as to give these words their power; O human being, experience yourself!” He continues on a little later in the speech with this theme of the ‘Weltengrund’, as subtly active in the human being, declaring that these same wise words,

... place me close to lofty Godly-intentions; and blissfully I feel the Creator-power of these high intentions in my weak earthly humanity. And out of myself there shall be revealed the reason why the germinal seed-bud is concealed within me. I want to give myself to the world, through the life of my own being.<sup>362</sup>

The implication here is that ‘Urgrund’ of the cosmos, having long ago placed itself into the depths of human being – in this case, Johannes – is now being cognized by its previously unaware bearer, and consequently is also being enabled to proceed in a more empowered manner within this same bearer. God is then mentioned, but as part of a complex noun, which focuses upon the will of Deity.

It is clear that Steiner has adapted and dramatized the entire Goethean fairy tale in a didactic manner for the purpose of elucidating many elements of his anthroposophy. I conclude that there are many passages in *Die Pforte* which show that Steiner regards the Goethean fairy tale as a text appropriate to the task of elucidating his view of the process of esoteric spiritual development, and the nature of the spiritual realities, and human dynamics which are encountered in this process. It is also emerging that a primary characteristic of Steiner’s commentary on Goethe’s works

---

<sup>362</sup>*Pforte*, 136-37, „Es lebt das ganze Weltenwesen in dem Seelensein, / wenn solche Kraft im Geiste wurzelt, Die Wahrheit gibt dem Worte: O Mensch, erlebe dich!“ / ... Und stellst mich neben hohe Gottesziele; / Und selig fühle ich / Des hohen Zieles Schöpfermacht/ In meinem schwachen Erdenmenschen. / Und offenbaren soll sich aus mir selbst, / Wozu der Keim in mir geborgen ist. / Ich will der Welt mich geben / Durch Leben meines eignen Wesens.“

in general, is that he sees them as particularly assimilable to his anthroposophical understanding of spiritual realities.

**4B: Steiner's view of the spirituality portrayed in *Die Pforte*, is quintessentially expressed by his interpretation of Goethe**

We have seen how Steiner has adopted and adapted Goethe's *Märchen*, as a vehicle to communicate his view of how esoteric initiatory spirituality is achieved. In the course of his elucidation of Goethe's *Märchen*, Steiner comments on a particular Goethean text which he finds very assimilable to his understanding of the spiritual goal of Johannes. The text in question is Goethe's deeply passionate love poem, from 1823, *Elegie*, in which he is grieving over the loss of the relationship with a young woman, Ulrike von Levetzow. In this poem Goethe reflects on many subtle aspects of love, loss and romantic yearning.

However, in a lecture on Goethe's *Märchen*, from April 1904, Steiner quotes an extract of this poem, and points out to his audience how in this section of the poem the theme is sensing the approach of the divine. He comments that this occurs as one's higher self becomes empowered, and earthly desires fall away. This interpretation, so far, is in agreement with scholarship, this passage concerns the urge to become united to the divine. To Steiner, it reflects Goethe's conviction that precisely such a sublime state of divine love is possible, as that represented by the fair Lily in *Das Märchen*, in Steiner's interpretation. In *Die Pforte* this is reflected in the figure of Maria, as she is the representative of the fair Lily. The German text – the two stanzas which Steiner quotes – is as follows,

In unsers Busens Reine wogt ein Streben,  
Sich einem Höhern, Reinern, Unbekanntem  
Aus Dankbarkeit freiwillig hinzugeben,  
Enträtselnd sich den ewig Ungenannten;  
Wir heißen's: fromm sein! –  
Solcher seligen Höhe fühl' ich mich teilhaft,  
Wenn ich vor ihr stehe.

Vor ihrem Blick, wie vor der Sonne Walten,  
Vor ihrem Atem, wie vor Frühlingslüften,  
Zerschmilzt, so längst sich eisig starr gehalten,  
Der Selbstsinn tief in winterlichen Gräften;  
Kein Eigennutzt, kein Eigenwille dauert,  
Vor ihrem Kommen sind sie weggeschauert...

This concept of encountering the divine, is clearly expressed in lines 1 to 4, that is,

In the purity of our heart, there surges a striving, born of gratitude, to freely surrender oneself to a higher, purer, Unknown [Power]; thus resolving the enigma to oneself of the Eternally Un-named; we call this – being pious!

This is agreed to by scholars in general, and by Steiner. However, Goethe then proceeds to say that he experiences this mood of piety, in the broader, mystical sense implied here, whenever he is in the presence 'ihr', which is a feminine or neuter pronoun, meaning either 'it' or 'her'. This word is normally thought of as feminine, and scholars agree that it refers to the object of Goethe's love, the young woman, Ulrike. This pronoun occurs three more times, and in each of these cases it is also thought of as 'her', and as referring to Ulrike. Consequently, the passage is translated in published texts, along the following lines; this pronoun is in bold font,

- 1 in the purity of our heart, there surges a striving, born of gratitude,
- 2 to freely surrender oneself to a higher, purer, Unknown [Power];
- 3 thus resolving the enigma to oneself of the Eternally Un-named;
- 4 we call this – being pious!
- 5 Of such blessed heights I feel
- 6 myself partake, when I stand before **her** –
- 7 before **her** gaze, just like before the power of the Sun,
- 8 beneath **her** breath, just like beneath springtime breezes,
- 9 melts away what long has lasted in chasms, in icy rigidity,
- 10 self-centredness that has persisted so long deep in wintry tomb;
- 11 No egoism or self-will lasts,

12 before her advent they have fled.<sup>363</sup>

It is clear from the above, that the section of the poem comprising lines 6 – 12, is understood to refer to Ulrike and is thus a testimonial to how powerfully Goethe was inspired by his feelings. That is, the piety mentioned earlier (lines 1-4) arises in his heart whenever he imagines he is in her presence, being seen by her, or feeling her breath, by which he may mean her ambience. Consequently, the triune forms of egocentric attitudes, in lines 10 and 11, are conquered as this woman (or the thought of her) draws near. As such, this interpretation is on particularly solid grounds, as Goethe was famously inspired in his artistic endeavours through his enflamed love affairs, and the entire poem is a powerful testimonial to his passionate love of Ulrike, and grief over her loss. The poet is moving from expressions of an utmost personal, romantic love, to a passage about the experience of divine love, though triggered by the contemplation of romantic love.

The stanza in *Elegie*, prior to the two that are under consideration here, reinforces this view, as Goethe writes of comparing the peace of God with the happy peace felt in romantic love. He also writes of feeling Ulrike's presence, and wanting to belong to her,

The peace of God, which, as we read,  
Blesses us here below more than reason,  
I would indeed compare with Love's happy peace,  
When in the presence of the dearest one.  
There the heart rests, and nothing can disturb  
the deepest intention: the thought of being hers.

In a lecture on *Das Märchen* Steiner comments that in this passage of Goethe's *Elegie* the symbol of the lily as used here was

---

<sup>363</sup>The normal view that all of the lines here refer to Goethe's sweetheart, can be found – addition to Trunz's commentary "ein Liebender klagt (a person in love mourns)" – for example in, *The Eternal Feminine: selected poems of Goethe*, trans. Frederick Ungar, (New York: F. Ungar Publishing Co. 1980), 163, and in *Goethe: Selected Poems*, ed. Christopher Middleton, *Elegie*, trans. John F. Nims, (Boston: Suhrkamp/Insel, 1983), 250.

also used by Spinoza in the same way, namely to designate a condition of wisdom which also bestows the condition of (inner) freedom,

One designates as the 'lily' what Spinoza ... expresses in his 'Ethics' when he designates that which the human being, when he arises into higher spheres of being ... designates as the realm of divine love within the human soul; that realm where the human being is no longer compelled [to action], but rather where everything which is the sphere of human knowledge and development occurs through freedom and devotion, and full of love ... Goethe has designated such love as the highest state of freedom, as the freedom from all desires and wishes of daily life ...<sup>364</sup>

Steiner then quotes these twelve lines from *Elegie*, referring to, "this Spinoza-like love of God, which Goethe wants to attain through spiritual alchemy ..."<sup>365</sup> The fact that the poem is primarily about romantic love, was a fact so well known that Steiner did not need to emphasize this. But in Steiner's interpretation of this verse, the verse concerns the dynamic in the human soul, wherein our most spiritual, most purified desire, can impel us on to a sense of the divine. There is no reference to a woman in Steiner's comments. In the above lecture, he quotes the two stanzas without indicating that they are preceded by, and followed by, stanzas in which the theme of romantic love is central. Hence in this interpretation, the pronoun 'her' in line 6, "feel myself partake,

---

<sup>364</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Goethes geheime Offenbarung*, 152-153, „Als Lilie bezeichnet man gleichzeitig dasjenige, was Spinoza ... ausdrückt, wenn er dasjenige, was der Mensch, der hinaufgestiegen ist in die höheren Sphären des Seins ... bezeichnet als das Reich der göttliche Liebe in der Menschenseele; das Reich, wo der Mensch zu nichts mehr gezwungen wird, sondern wo alles dasjenige, was im Bereich der menschlichen Erkenntnis und Entwicklung liegt, aus Freiheit und Hingebung, aus voller Liebe geschieht ... Goethe hat jene Liebe bezeichnet als das höchste Freisein, als das Freisein von allen Begierden und Wünschen des alltäglichen Lebens.“

<sup>365</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Goethes geheime Offenbarung*, 152, „Diese Spinozistische Gottesliebe, die erreichen will durch spirituelle Alchimie ... wo jeder Zwang, jede Willkür verwandelt wird durch spirituelle Alchimie, wo alles Handeln einfließt in das Gebiet der Freiheit.“

when I stand before her” – the entity that has caused him to feel a nearness to the divine – would now refer to the purity of the heart. This becomes the factor which is stimulating Goethe to feel the uplifting mystical presence of the divine. Furthermore, in the way that Steiner quotes the text, the referent of the entire section remains that of purity, from the phrase in line 1. Hence all of the references to this divine spiritual reality, expressed in lines 7-12, derive from feeling a nearness to the divine, not to Ulrike.

Consequently, in the way that Steiner uses this verse, the pronouns, the references to ‘her’ in the usual translation, from line 6-12, all refer to the purity of the heart. These have to be rendered as ‘it’ in English, although it can still be read as ‘her’ in German, as ‘purity’ is a feminine noun. Additionally, a few phrases need to be adjusted as to their nuances, so that the translation would read accordingly as follows,

- 1 in the purity of our heart, there surges a striving, born of gratitude,
- 2 to freely surrender oneself to a higher, purer, Unknown [Power];
- 3 thus resolving the enigma to oneself of the Eternally Un-named;
- 4 we call this – being pious!
- 5 In such blessed heights I feel
- 6 myself partake, when I am in its presence –
- 7 before its gaze, as if facing the power of the Sun,
- 8 before its breath, as if before springtime breezes,
- 9 melts away what has lasted so long in icy rigidity –
- 10 self-centredness, deep in wintry tombs;
- 11 No self-interest, no self-will, lasts;
- 12 before its dawning presence they have shuddered away

In this form, the passage accommodates Steiner’s interpretation that the element which is bringing about this condition in Goethe is not his beloved, but ‘the heart’s purity’, because now the yearning is to achieve union with the divine. There are two major differences between the accepted meaning of this section of the poem, and Steiner’s interpretation. Firstly, to Steiner, that Goethe, impelled by his yearning for the woman, has now moved to the theme that, amongst the emotional drives in human heart, there is a particularly spiritualized, purified urge, namely to seek union with the divine. But, now Goethe feels this urge when he senses the efficacy of this

purity, and not the presence of his sweetheart. Secondly, to Steiner, whenever Goethe senses this purity exerting its influence upon him, and thus feels a divine presence is approaching, and removing his egocentric urges, this is due to the nearness of 'the heart's purity', not his beloved woman.

Thus in line 6, "myself partake, when I am in its presence –" the intended image, in Steiner's view, is not that of physically standing before another physical person, nor a visionary view of the beloved woman. Rather the image is one of cognizing that oneself is within the immediate and activated ambit of something, namely the highest urges in the heart. The German phrase used here, and usually rendered "when I stand before it", is based on a well-established German idiom, which can be so understood, and then directly transferred into English. But it also has a nuance of being in the ambit of something, and, in terms of Steiner's interpretation, line 6 would be understood as 'when I am in the presence of', and not 'when I stand before'.

It is with other phrases in the poem that Steiner's interpretation of this Goethean text reveals how he can view the verse as affirmative of his esoteric-spiritual worldview. The major divergence in Steiner's interpretation is that the experiences in this passage are descriptive of a universal mystical experience, and no longer a personal experience of Goethe's, deriving from romantic love. On this basis, line 7, which is usually, "before her gaze, just like before the power of the Sun" now has to read, "before its gaze, as if facing the power of the Sun". This now implies that it is the heart's purity which is encountered, and this has the effect mentioned later, that selfishness melts away. Thus to Steiner the experience is one in which one's own highest spiritual urges – enveloped in a divine milieu – are encountered, as an external reality, radiantly illumining (with spiritual light) one's sentiency. This stands in strong contrast to the accepted view, of Goethe himself seeing his beloved, either physically, or in a visionary sense.

Furthermore, line 8 which is usually, "beneath her breath, just like beneath springtime breezes," now is viewed as indicating the presence of a sacred spiritual reality, and has to read, "before its breath, as if before springtime breezes." This interpretation views the encountering of the purity of the heart, the highest spiritual drives active in the soul-body, as similar to sensing quickening



springtime breezes. This contrasts to the normal interpretation of this line, namely that the effects of perceiving the breath-stream (or subtle ambience?) of a deeply beloved person is causing selfishness to melt away. The usual rendering here may possibly allow that the term, 'her breath' is metaphorical for Ulrike's ambience, rather than her breath as such. However, the expression, 'her gaze', in the previous line, does not appear to be metaphorical.

Finally, the last three lines in Steiner's interpretation bring into yet sharper focus his differing interpretation and consequent utilisation of Goethe's text. These lines become an attestation to the spiritual path for any acolyte; it is no longer a personal experience of Goethe's. It thus concerns the powerful effect of the impinging upon 'Everyman's' normal consciousness of his most spiritual urges – rather than a sensing by Goethe himself of his beloved's presence. These three lines are usually,

10 self-centredness (that has persisted so long) in deep wintry tombs;  
11 No egoism or self-will lasts,  
12 before her advent they have fled.

But they now become, to accommodate Steiner's use of this text,

10 self-centredness, deep in wintry tombs;  
11 No self-interest, no self-will, lasts;  
12 before its dawning presence they have shuddered away

Consequently all three negative attributes, self-centredness, self-interest and self-will, 'shudder away' as the heart's purity manifests. The image created by this interpretation, accords with Steiner's view of the outcome of attaining to a high state of spirituality (piety). It allows Steiner to affirm his anthroposophical perspective that precisely the polar opposite to the condition of piety – self-centredness – is eradicated from one's attitudinal qualities and emotive responses through the condition of attaining to spirituality, or at least of sensing its approach. With regard to line 12, to accommodate Steiner's interpretation here, a more suitably nuanced rendering of 'Vor ihrem Kommen' ('before its advent'), has been necessary, 'before its dawning presence'.

This same way of interpreting Goethe was evinced some sixteen years earlier, when Steiner was still working on Goethe's scientific writings, for inclusion in *Kürschners National Literatur* series. In his editorial comments, in 1888, he writes,

... Goethe has the need to sense something higher [in all things] and works his way up to this. He sought in everything to find a side, through which it becomes holy to us. Schröer has shown this in the most brilliant manner, in regard to Goethe's attitude to love. Everything frivolous, thoughtless, was stripped away and love becomes pioussness for Goethe. This basic characteristic of his nature is most beautifully expressed in these words of his, '... In unsers Busens Reine wogt ein Streben, sich einem Höhern, Reinern, Unbekannten aus Dankbarkeit freiwillig hinzugeben, EnträtseInd sich den ewig Ungenannten; Wir heißen's: fromm sein!'<sup>366</sup>

So here too, in the pre-anthroposophical phase of his life, Steiner views this same verse in a similar way to that which he expresses in 1904, quoting only the section which does not refer to Ulrike. However, it is clear from the above comments, that Steiner allows that in Goethe's case, personal love can lead to a pious, spiritual state of soul. But in contrast to the normal interpretation, he views this specific section of *Elegie* as referring to such spiritual realities, rather than romantically inspired moods. Just how Goethe himself viewed this slightly ambiguous passage in *Elegie*, is unknown, for, as Trunz points out, Goethe kept the verse as a special, sacred work, which was shown to only a few privileged people.<sup>367</sup>

In his above comments on this passage from *Elegie*, Steiner describes the state of spirituality in terms of his holistic episte-

---

<sup>366</sup>*Kürschners Nat. Lit. Goethes Werke*, Bd. 115, liv. "Goethe hat das Bedürfnis, ein Höheres zu ahnen und sich zu ihm emporzuarbeiten. Jedem Ding sucht er eine Seite abzugewinnen, wodurch es uns heilig wird. Schröer hat das in geistvollster Weise in Bezug auf Goethes Verhalten in der Liebe gezeigt. Alles Frivole, Leichtfertige war abgestreift und die Liebe wird für Goethe ein Frommsein. Dieser Grundzug seines Wesens ist am schönsten in seinen Worten ausgesprochen: 'In unsers Busen Reine wogt ein Streben ? Sich einem Höhern, Unbekannten / Aus Dankbarkeit freiwillig hinzugeben ... Wir heißen's: Frommsein!'"

<sup>367</sup>Goethes Werke, HA, Bd.1, 586.

mology; the condition of spirituality which manifests as love for God, is also a condition of true freedom. That is, in true freedom, all actions are carried out from an inherent ethical quality, which has now been attained. Hence these actions occur in the realm of divine love in the human soul,

... the realm where the human being is no longer compelled to any deed, rather where everything, which lies in the realm of human knowledge and development, happens through freedom and devotion, from deep love ... where every compulsion, every arbitrary act, becomes transformed through a spiritual alchemy, where all actions flow into the realm of freedom.<sup>368</sup>

To Steiner the condition of freedom is an ethical state, the final goal of spirituality, and is crucial both for the fulfilment of the human potential as well as for the future of civilisation. This condition is one in which a person has the above qualities of a spontaneously ethical nature as an inherent quality. It is also to Steiner a state of exceptional spirituality, because to him 'freedom' is not simply a condition bestowed upon the human being, rather is a condition which, developed through specific arduous esoteric soul-exercises, is the truest manifestation of the human spirit. To Steiner, 'love' is primarily a capacity developed in the volitional powers of the soul; in effect, 'good will'.

Further, the attainment of such spirituality is seen by Steiner as the fulfilling of the actual intention underlying the creation of humanity. In Steiner's anthroposophy, humanity has the mission to be the bearer of (spiritual, selfless) love. He elucidates his theory in lectures on the Gospel of St. John, where he maintains that Christ is the Being of spiritual love, or good-will in the finest sense. He concludes that the result of the Incarnation of Christ, fulfilled through the Passion and Resurrection is that human souls have the

---

<sup>368</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Goethes geheime Offenbarung*, 152, „ ... das Reich wo der Mensch zu nichts mehr gezwungen wird, sondern wo alles dasjenige, was im Bereich der menschlichen Erkenntnis und Entwicklung liegt, aus Freiheit und Hingebung, aus voller Liebe geschieht ... wo jeder Zwang, jede Willkür verwandelt wird durch spirituelle Alchemie, wo alles Handeln einfließt in das Gebiet der Freiheit.“

very real potential to achieve this state of freedom, or ethical intuitiveness.<sup>369</sup>

It is also this condition of inherent volitional morality, which he writes about in his pre-anthroposophical phase, in his *Philosophie der Freiheit*, referring to it as the 'standpoint of free (or independent) morality', which does not declare,<sup>370</sup>

... the free spirit to be the only form in which a person can exist. It sees the free spirit just the final stage of development of the human being ... When Kant says, "Duty! You exalted and mighty name, you who comprise nothing loving nor ingratiating, but demands submission, you that 'sets up a law' {...} before which all inclinations are silent, even though they secretly work against it ..." then, out of the consciousness of the free spirit, the human being replies, "Freedom!, you friendly, human name, who encompasses all that is morally most lovable, all that my manhood most values, and makes me a servant of no-one, you who sets up no mere law, but rather waits what my moral love itself will recognize as a law, because in the face of every merely imposed law, it feels itself unfree.'

This perspective is closely echoed in Steiner's lecture on the Goethean tale in which he quoted from *Elegie*, he comments that "Goethe [in his *Elegy*] has designated this love as the highest state

---

<sup>369</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Das Johannes Evangelium*, (Dornach: RSV, 1981), Lect. 3

<sup>370</sup>Steiner, *Philosophie*, 134-135, ,, ... nicht, daß der freie Geist die einzige Gestalt ist, in der ein Mensch existieren kann. Sie sieht in der freien Geistigkeit nur das letzte Entwicklungsstadium des Menschen ... Wenn Kant von der Pflicht sagt: „Pflicht! du erhabener, großer Name, der du nichts Beliebtes, was Einschmeichelung bei sich führt, in dir fasst, sondern Unterwerfung verlangst, der du kein Gesetz aufstellst ..., vor dem allem alle Neigungen verstummen, wenn sie gleich in Geheim (sic!) ihm entgegenwirken“, so erwidert der Mensch aus dem Bewußtsein des freien Geistes: „Freiheit! du freundlicher, menschlicher Name, der du alles sittlich Beliebte, was mein Menschentum am meisten würdigt, in dir fassst, und mich zu niemandes Diener machst, der du nicht bloß ein Gesetz aufstellst, sondern abwartest, was meine sittliche Liebe selbst als Gesetz erkennen wird, weil sie jedem nur auferzwungenen Gesetze gegenüber sich unfrei fühlt.“

of freedom, as a freedom from all desires and wishes of the everyday mundane world.<sup>371</sup>

However, central to this entire process of achieving divine illumination in Goethe's tale, are the actions of the Green Snake, it is her actions in sacrificing herself, which make possible the resolution of the dilemma facing the Youth. The character of the Green Snake was regarded by Steiner as an expression of a profound insight by Goethe. To him, as we have seen, it is the representative of the ability slumbering within the human being to selflessly engage itself in life, to rid oneself of egocentric drives; it is therefore the key to initiation.<sup>372</sup> As such, to Steiner the Green Snake must also represent subtly the result of the Incarnation and consequent sacrifice of Christ, however, this is not brought to expression in *Die Pforte*. However, Steiner's differing interpretations of the pronouns in these lines of the poem supports his view of the Green Snake, and its pivotal role in allowing access to the fair Lily.

I conclude that Steiner's view of spirituality is quintessentially expressed by his interpretation of this section of Goethe's *Elegie*. His interpretation of Goethe's *Märchen* in general, expresses his view of how to attain to this state. Hence, the 'shuddering away of self-will' occurs through the 'dawning presence' of one's approaching spiritual-self; which he sees expressed in the *Elegie*. And this process is the result of attaining to the selfless 'harvesting' of life's experiences, which the Green Snake represents. The Goethean metaphor of the Lily has become to Steiner descriptive of the attainment of selfless love; the bridge over to this condition is the capacity which bestows an urge to harvest wisdom from life's experiences.

---

<sup>371</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Goethes geheime Offenbarung*, (Dornach: RSV, 1982), 152, „Das Höchste, was der Mensch anstreben kann, das Höchste, in was sich der Mensch verwandeln sollte, das bezeichnet Goethe mit dem Symbol der Lilie. Es ist gleichbedeutend mit dem was wir die höchste Weisheit nennen. Goethe hat jene Liebe bezeichnet als das höchste Freisein, als das Freisein von allen Begierden und Wünschen des alltäglichen Lebens.“

<sup>372</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Goethes geheime Offenbarung in seinem Märchen von der grünen Schlange und der schönen Lilie*, (Dornach: RSV 1982), 158-9.

#### **4C: The concepts of reincarnation and karma are seen as compatible to Christianity, and are understood to have a rational basis**

We have seen how the concepts of karma and of reincarnation are an integral part of the thematic elements of *Die Pforte*. The past lives of Maria, Johannes and the child are revealed. The inclusion of this episode, quite new to the thematic elements of the Goethean tale, brings the concept of pre-existence and past lives to the fore, and reveals the importance Steiner places on emphasizing the concept of repeated earth-lives.

In the early scenes of *Die Pforte*, Johannes is undergoing what Steiner would term, 'karmic awareness'. This episode portrays the concepts of karma and of reincarnation as a reality, and as providing insightful understanding of the feelings that arise between people. So Johannes needs firstly, to gain the knowledge of the past life – which Theodora provides – and then he can become aware of subtle spiritual forces at work in his consciousness processes, and of how these have their origin in his past lives upon the Earth. These concepts also provide an explanation for people becoming associated with other people in a future lifetime. That Steiner included these themes in *Die Pforte* is indicative of their considerable importance in his anthroposophical worldview. This is indicated strongly in regard to the past life of the child; this child was, as Theodora reveals, the one member of the forest tribe who felt hatred for the missionary (Maria), and vowed revenge. As we noted in Section 3D, the child is a representative of the canary in *Das Märchen*.

This is a minor theme in Goethe's tale, and the child does not reappear in Steiner's drama after Scene Three, even though in Goethe's tale it (the canary) does appear in later episodes. Steiner has reduced the role of the canary (the child) in terms of its allegorical meaning in Goethe's tale, but utilizes it to present further aspects to his view of karma, namely, that if a person conceives hate for another, it will be drawn into the destiny of that person, in a future life. Furthermore, it is clear that Maria was a loving foster-mother, despite the child's antipathy, and despite the fact that through her spiritual enlightenment she knew of the child's past-life of hatred towards her. The implication here is that the

person who is the victim, or target of the hate, will be faced – through the dynamics of ‘karma’ - with the Christian challenge of ‘loving those who are one’s enemies’. Hence this dynamic appears to be an allusion to the words of Christ expressed in Matthew’s Gospel, 5:43, “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” The implication is also there that this will be the case whether one has knowledge of the dynamics through attaining to karmic awareness, or whether one simply has the other person brought into one’s life by destiny, since Maria did not have this knowledge of karma at first, she attained it after some years.

However, it is also significant that the actual theme within the sequence of lives of Johannes and Maria is Christianity, indicating to the audience that these two themes are not mutually contradictory. Maria as a male was then a Christian missionary, and quite skilled at representing Christ, and even though at first the tribespeople are angered, he is able to calm them, “ ... But still the man speaks calmly on. He tells about the God who descended to Earth as man, who thus has conquered death. He speaks of Christ. And as he goes on speaking, their souls grow gentler ...”<sup>373</sup> An additional conclusion which can be drawn here, is that this speech informs the audience that today’s representatives of the Christian religion are themselves a constituent part of the web of karma of humanity, whether they accept the concept or not.

Steiner spoke on numerous occasions to refute concern that the concept of reincarnation stands in conflict with central doctrines of Christianity, in particular, those of Redemption and vicarious Atonement. Steiner’s Christology and general theological tenets and exegesis of Christian texts, cannot be examined in this study, but it is necessary to briefly note his position on this matter. In an early lecture cycle, he maintained that it is possible to reconcile the apparent incompatibilities between these two attitudes by considering that karma posits that a person influences the karma of another, by a good or evil deed. Further, a karmic deed can be one in which someone helps (or harms) a thousand people; likewise the deed of

---

<sup>373</sup>*Pforte*, 114, „Es spricht der Mann gelassen weiter. Er redet von dem Menschengotte, der zu der Erde niederstieg, und der den Tod besiegte. Von Christus redet er. Und wie er weiterspricht, da sänftigen sich die Seelen ...“

Christ in the Crucifixion and Resurrection – the deeds which brought about Redemption and Atonement – assisted mightily the destiny of many millions, of all humanity. Hence, Steiner argues, in this sense it is an instance of a deed which has wrought an immense karmic consequence.<sup>374</sup>

However, we noted in Section A4 his concern that his anthroposophical worldview, or ‘spiritual science’, be considered a worthy adjunct to the emerging rational, scientific approach to life. Consequently, Steiner sought to place such convictions as that of repeated earth lives on a rational basis. In his early text, *Theosophy: an introduction to the Supra-sensible Knowledge of the World and the Destination of Man*, Steiner argues that a phenomenological approach to the human soul-life can result in conclusions which are supportive of the concept of ‘karma’. He starts his argument by referring to cognitive dynamics, and after elucidating them briefly, he returns to these same dynamics, and draws further conclusions from them.

His exposition begins by pointing out that one would have to repeatedly see a sense-object, for example, a rose, in order to recall its colour, if one did not possess the faculty of memory. Through this capacity, he concludes, we have made a transient object into an ongoing object (‘enduring’, if not ‘eternal’). This is the outcome of our ability to form an image of the rose, and to recall this image. The soul can subsequently recall such images at will in the years ahead, or they manifest in consciousness when some external inducement stimulates this recall. Thus the soul-life has become an ongoing result of a transient cause, the fleeting sense-impression.

But, he also points out; action receives permanence, once it becomes fully acted out, that is, once a deed is stamped onto the outer world. By performing a deed, such as closing a factory, or cutting down a tree, or helping an injured person, something has happened which completely changes the course of events in the world. He then argues that what one has done externally as a deed, which was also transient, taking only perhaps a few minutes, has now become ongoing, enduring. He then points out that normally we do not form a clear, specific concept of this “ongoing-ness” of a deed. That is, we don’t have a concept for this, which is parallel –

---

<sup>374</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophie des Rosenkreuzers*, 78-79.



but polar – to the concept of ‘memory’, wherein a transient external stimulus becomes ongoing within human consciousness.

Nevertheless, his argument continues in *Theosophie*, what I have done today endures into tomorrow (and beyond), just as my impressions of yesterday have become permanent through the faculty of remembrance. Steiner then points out that the ego of the human being is linked to, and changed by, the various transient sense-stimuli. That is to say, we assess and respond to sense impressions differently, according to what our reservoir of sense impressions contains. If this is the case, he asks, “Will not the self of a person be just as much linked to the alterations in the world, which result from his deeds, as it is to a memory, resulting from a sense impression?”<sup>375</sup>

Steiner draws a conclusion at this point, namely that we assess new sense impressions differently, according to what we have taken as sensory memories. That is, the world has a different relationship to us, to our inner life, as a result of what we taken into ourselves, and which have become mental images, capable of being recalled. He then argues for the polar opposite of this dynamic, concluding that so too, the human being, considered as an ego, has entered into a different relationship to the world, as a result of the (transient) deeds that we imprinted into the world (and which are ongoing). Steiner also points out in *Theosophie*, that the human will is in effect embodied in actions that we undertake, a deed is an expression of intention. He then concludes his argument by asking,

If one really thinks out what is here being considered, the question must arise as to whether the results of a deed on which the ego has stamped its own nature might not retain a tendency to return to the ego, just as a sense-impression, preserved in the memory, revives in response to some external inducement? What is preserved in the memory waits for such an inducement. Could not that which has retained the imprint of the ego in the external world also wait, so as to approach the human

---

<sup>375</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophie: Einführung in übersinnliche Welterkenntnis und Menschenbestimmung*, (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1975), 89.

soul *from without*, just as memory, in response to a given inducement, approaches *from within*?<sup>376</sup>

It becomes clear from this argument that the concept he is attempting to logically validate is that of 'karma', understood as the deeds invoked into one's life experience, once they are given the appropriate inducement, that is, opportunity. He further concludes it is clear that, for this concept we do not have a specific word – that is, a term in a European language that has arisen from the thoughts and life-experience of European thinkers. Both the European and English peoples only have the term borrowed from Sanskrit for this, because the terms, 'destiny' and 'fate' do not specifically denote multiple lives in normal conversation.

Steiner is aware in the argument, that he has not yet refuted the theory which asserts that the differing life experiences and abilities of humankind have been determined before birth by God. Again, when arguing for the validity of karma, Steiner attempts by logical argument to affirm, if not prove, that such pre-ordaining of life is incorrect. He does this by deducing that the human soul further develops its aptitudes, and strengthens its abilities, whilst in the spiritual realms, between life times.

His attempt in *Theosophie* to logically demonstrate the validity of such a spiritual concept, is one of the most difficult passages in all of his works. His argument is based on defining the characteristic formative dynamics implicit in those influences efficacious on the human being in the earthly environs, in contrast to those active when the disembodied soul is within a spiritual environment. In a section of the book that examines the concept of repeated earth-lives, he seeks to refute the alternative argument, namely that the

---

<sup>376</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophie*, 89-92, „Man wird, wenn man das hier in Betracht Kommende wirklich durchdenkt, zu der Frage kommen, könnte es nicht sein, daß die Folge einer vollbrachten Tat, denen ihr Wesen durch das „Ich“ aufgeprägt ist, eine Tendenz erhalten, zu dem Ich wieder hinzuzutreten, wie ein im Gedächtnis bewahrter Eindruck wieder auflebt, wenn sich dazu eine äußere Veranlassung ergibt? Das im Gedächtnis Bewahrte wartet auf eine solche Veranlassung. Könnte nicht das in der Außenwelt mit dem Ich-Charakter Bewahrte ebenso warten, um so von *außen* an die Menschenseele heranzutreten, wie die Erinnerung von innen an diese Seele bei gegebener Veranlassung herantritt?“

soul attains its abilities through acquiring them whilst in Heaven, before birth. So, in this scenario, the different qualities in human beings are the result of a differing time in the spiritual realm, prior to the one life-time upon the Earth,

The first thinkable alternative would be this, that I owe the form of the content of my life-history to a spiritual life only prior to birth, that is, prior to conception. But one would only be entitled to hold this perception only if one were willing to assume that what acts upon the human soul from its physical surroundings is of the same nature as what the soul receives from a purely spiritual realm. But such an assumption contradicts really exact observation.<sup>377</sup>

This next passage is a difficult text, which illustrates his approach to establish a logical argument for spiritual concepts,

For, what is determinative in this physical environment for the human soul is of this nature – its efficacy is similar to the effect that an earlier experience – in physical life – has upon another experience, of the same kind. In order to correctly observe this relationship, one has to learn to perceive how there are influences efficacious in human life, which effect the aptitudes of the soul as if one were placed before a deed which has yet to be done, in contrast to that which one has already practised. Except that such influences though not indeed, encountering something already practised in this life [abilities] – encounter soul-aptitudes which do allow themselves to be influenced in the same way, as do talents which are acquired through practise.<sup>378</sup>

---

<sup>377</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophie*, 104, „Der andere *zunächst* denkbare Fall wäre der, daß ich die Ausgestaltung dessen, was Inhalt meiner Biographie ist, *nur* einem geistigen Leben *vor* der Geburt, (beziehungsweise der Empfängnis) verdanke. Zu dieser Vorstellung hätte man aber nur Berechtigung, wenn man annehmen wollte, daß, was auf die Menschenseele aus dem physischen Umkreis herein wirkt, gleichartig sei mit dem, was die Seele aus einer nur geistigen Welt hat. Eine solche Annahme widerspricht der wirklich genauen Beobachtung.“

<sup>378</sup>„Denn was aus dieser physischen Umgebung bestimmend für die Menschenseele ist, das ist so, daß es wirkt wie ein später im physischen Leben Erfahrenes auf ein in gleicher Art früher Erfahrenes. Um diese Verhältnisse richtig zu beobachten, muß man sich den Blick dafür aneignen, wie es im Menschenleben wirksame Eindrücke gibt, die so

The initial statement “For, what is determinative in this physical environment for the human soul is of this nature – its efficacy is similar to the effect that an earlier experience – in physical life – has upon another experience, of the same kind” is to be seen in the context of abilities and aptitudes. It means that, with regard to life on the Earth, a later, repeated, experience reinforces one’s existential understanding of the challenges involved, and hence leads to greater skill in that ability.

His next statement in the above extract, points out that there is also a different kind of repetitious influence to which we can be subject. This influence is different in two ways; firstly, it encounters solely aptitudes, not abilities. Aptitudes are of course, abilities which are still only potential, so the aptitude has not as yet actually become manifested in a practical activity. Secondly, the aptitude actually does allow itself to be influenced by these (repeated) influences, in a dynamic similar to that which causes an ability to become enhanced through repeated exposure.

An analysis of this passage is greatly assisted by reference to his lectures concerning the existence of the soul in the realm of the Idea, the spiritual realms, between lifetimes. In these texts, Steiner maintains that in the spiritual realm the soul is exposed to influences that are attracted to, and flow into, their corresponding qualities within that soul, “Just as the human being here is continually under the influence of the external atmosphere, likewise in Devachan; and there the ‘atmosphere’ is formed all the sum total of the soul-life [prevalent in that realm]. He explains to his audience that all this is constantly exerting its efficacy upon the soul, and in this way the disembodied soul gathers new forces for its approaching new life.<sup>379</sup>

---

auf die Anlagen der Seele wirken, wie das Stehen vor einer zu verrichtenden Tat gegenüber dem, was man im physischen Leben schon geübt hat; nur daß solche Eindrücke eben nicht auf ein in diesem unmittelbaren Leben schon Geübtes auftreffen, sondern auf Seelenanlagen die sich so beeindrucken lassen wie die durch Übung erworbenen Fähigkeiten.“ *Theosophie*, 104.

<sup>379</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Menschheitsentwicklung und Christus-Erkennntnis*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1967), 60, „Wie nämlich hier auf Erden der Mensch dauernd unter den Einflüssen der äußeren Atmosphären steht, so auch im Devachan, und dort ist die Atmosphäre ja gebildet aus allem See-

This passage clarifies the extract from *Theosophie* namely; the result of this ambient activity on the soul in the spiritual realm of the Idea is that the milieu of that realm strengthens any tendency towards any given talent, until it becomes an incipient aptitude. This incipient aptitude then manifests as an aptitude, once the soul is reborn. Here Steiner is not concerned with a specific ability, rather with the concept of how a person on the Earth can become equipped with a talent for something, such as being a composer of classical music. He is arguing that any slight tendency towards a certain gift, which exists in the soul between lifetimes, becomes strengthened as a potential, as an incipient aptitude, as a result of the environment in the spiritual realms. On Earth, that aptitude may never be given an opportunity to be developed, and hence may never proceed further to become an ability. In any event, that aptitude can become a talent only through earthly activity; it is the repeated practising of an activity by a person that develops their aptitude into an ability, and consequently allows the ability to become ever more enhanced.

In the above quote extracted from *Theosophie*, Steiner is implying that it is the constant exposure to spiritual influences that gradually incubates an aptitude; and this, in turn, is only possible because the soul does actually respond to these influences. He is further implying that only on the Earth, in physical life, can an ability be enhanced, whereas in a spiritual sphere the most that can be achieved with regard to a person's capability, is to incubate an aptitude, and to strengthen any aptitude that already exists. But the presence of an ability, a tangible talent, can only arise through the experience of using those skills on the Earth.

Hence Steiner concludes that the differing talents of people can only have their origin in a past life. To illustrate his point, he refers to an exceptional case, that of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who could write down the entire score of a long musical composition, which he heard as school child. He concludes that this talent, in accordance with his viewpoint here, must have been repeatedly exercised in prior lives, perhaps several lives of musical activity. That is, Mozart would have had a mere aptitude, several lifetimes

---

lenleben ... All dies Seelenleben wirkt dauernd auf den Menschen ein ...“.

ago, which, in the times he passed in the spiritual realm, was able to gradually develop into a fully developed talent.<sup>380</sup>

Steiner then argues against 'materialists', by which he means those to whom there can be no existence before conception or after the body has died. He points out that this viewpoint is against 'miracles', these are not permitted to the materialist. But those who support this viewpoint ascribe the phenomenal memory capacity of Mozart to heredity. This is an argument which, Steiner argues, is another form of superstition. He argues that just as a frog cannot have its origin in mud – as was thought in mediaeval times – so too, it can not be argued that Mozart's talent has arisen out of nothing. Steiner maintains that if the materialist wishes to ascribe this memory to heredity – but wherein no such musical genius has existed – then this is a form of 'reversed superstition'. Steiner's conclusion here is based on the view that, as a consciousness capacity, such a talent of genius must have a cause which derives from consciousness processes occurring in someone, and thus it has to be derived from the repeated development of an ability over several lives,

Those who, in accordance with a materialistic viewpoint accept that such a perfect memory as that of the young Mozart can arise out of nothing, should draw the consequences of their viewpoint, and accept that, for example, frogs arise out of mud, which, as is well known, science had accepted, before Francesco Redi.<sup>381</sup>

Francesco Redi (1626-1698) was an early Italian scientist who established by experiments, that the concept of spontaneous generation was invalid; that is, living creatures can only be produced by other living creatures, that inanimate material cannot produce life. He carried out experiments with flies, disproving the doctrine,

---

<sup>380</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Menschheitsentwicklung*, 51.

<sup>381</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Menschheitsentwicklung*, 52, „Und diejenigen, die nach materialistischer Anschauungsweise annehmen, daß ein so vollkommenes Gedächtnis wie das des jungen Mozart aus dem Nichts entstehen kann, die sollen auch die Konsequenz aus ihrer Anschauungsweise ziehen und annehmen, daß zum Beispiel Frösche sich ohne weiteres aus dem Schlamm entwickeln, wie es ja die Naturwissenschaft bekanntlich vor Francesco Redi angenommen hat.“

ascribed to Aristotle, that they arise spontaneously from rotting flesh.<sup>382</sup>

The insertion into *Die Pforte* of the episode in which Theodora perceives the past life personalities of Johannes and Maria reflects the didactic purpose of Steiner, to present this central theme in his anthroposophy as a reality in human existence. Maria is declared by Theodora to have been a noble soul in a past life, for she was a skilled missionary for Christ, and this generated the karma that she was reborn as someone capable of having interest and ability in anthroposophical spiritual teachings. However, the past lives episode in Chapter Seven is also a reflection of another didactic intention in this regard. It is Steiner's understanding that the outcome of a lifetime's experience is absorbed into the eternal spirit of each human being, enriching and consolidating this transcendent aspect of the human being.

Within the human spirit, whose locus is the spiritual realm, indeed the realm of the Platonic Idea, are preserved the memories of events in each past life. He taught that the eternal 'causal-body' exists in the Platonic realm of Ideas, and also that which some mystics refer to as 'the memory of nature' occurs here.<sup>383</sup> Steiner, using theosophical terminology, refers to this record as the 'Akashic Record'; this means a realm consisting of a substance, or rather energy, known as 'akasha' in Theosophical terminology. This energy has the capacity to receive an imprint of all events which occur as history unfolds on the Earth. Steiner taught that it contains the scenes of all persons' prior lives.

Consequently, it is clear that this episode in Scene Seven is intended to point to the concept of karma as a reality, and to portray an experience of this archetypal realm, thereby illustrating that the nature of the higher consciousness which Johannes' initiation makes possible access to the Platonic realm of the Idea. I also conclude that it is Steiner's wish to point out, by including the past-lives episode in *Die Pforte*, that in order to attain to a consciousness which embraces the eternal higher ego, the meditator must attain to this realm.

---

<sup>382</sup>*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, ed. Warren E. Preece, (Chicago: William Benton, 1971), vol. 8, *Entomology*, 610.

<sup>383</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Die Theosophie des Rosenkreuzers*, (Dornach: RSV, 1979), 44.

#### **4D: Steiner's earlier holistic epistemology is based on a prototype of the 'ether-body' postulate**

A perspective underlying Steiner's philosophical writings, prior to 1900, is that human consciousness is not body-derived, but rather the human being has a soul, in which (undefined) spiritual forces are also active. The structure and dynamics in this model of this soul-spiritual human being are presented in *Die Pforte*, but this was never elucidated in his earlier phase. We noted in Section One that his philosophical writings merely imply that the omission of some unidentified 'holistic' factor has resulted in an erroneous purely mechanistic, materialistic view of the human being and its consciousness processes. To Steiner, the term 'objective' is extended to mean a valid existence, not only in the material molecular realm, but also in the ether energies. In his *Theosophie*, this subtle body is said to be responsible for the maintenance of our life-processes.

It is the function of the life-force organism, Steiner's 'ether-body', to mediate thoughts, feelings and will, as well as sensory objects, to consciousness. Furthermore, and significantly, in terms of his epistemology, hallucinations and visionary experiences are also regarded as being objectively perceived contents of the soul-life of the person. The categorizing of these latter as deceptive or inherently non-existent, in terms of cognitive processes, is regarded by Steiner as just as epistemologically invalid as the same conclusion regarding sense impressions. Because in his view, whether a human being registers the presence of a sensory stimulus or an element of their soul-life, or a spiritual being, these are experienced via the mediating function of the ether-body. The ether-body registers an intuitive idea, a flowering bush, a flash of anger or a non-physical (spirit) entity; these are considered objective experiences, because he views them as images formed in the ether-body, and mediated to consciousness by this 'body'. Perception of them is underpinned by the function of the life-force organism or ether-body. That is, not only is the sensory registering of a sense object carried through to consciousness by this energetic organism, but so too is perception of consciousness dynamics.

Furthermore, hallucinatory images (sounds, odours) are considered to be objectively perceived, whether induced by schizophrenia, drug addiction or psychic practises. Steiner does not dis-



pute that when a disturbed mental dynamic conjures forth a normal sense-world image or sound, (where it cannot actually be present), or a fantastical creature, this is a deceptive product of consciousness. But with regard to hallucinatory imagery, Steiner maintains that the ether-body brings both these images, arising in the soul, to consciousness. An hallucination has validity in so far as it is an image manifesting unhealthily in the network of energies which constitutes the life-force body, and there it is cognised by the soul. With regard to hallucinations, Steiner maintained on one occasion that a bodily illness can result in these "if the ether process extends beyond its limits into the corporeal, because of the fact that the body, through its ill-health can not provide the appropriate resistance, then that arises which one calls an hallucination."<sup>384</sup>

The implication here is that perception of images, whether of a recalled memory, or an 'hallucination' is, by definition, a perceived image and therefore must have its locus in this life-force organism. No image or sound or amorphous coloured psychic 'form', etc can be perceived without it being present in the life-force organism. Steiner views the question as to its reality in terms of its origin in that organism. Naturally if the 'hallucinatory' object is not physically present, then the respective image is existent only in the ether-body and the soul.

But Steiner also gives a role to the soul in cognition. The implications of his argument in *Theosophie* is that the ether-body mediates the images of sense impressions, detected by the sense organs in the ambient environment, and conducts these further into the corporeality. When this reaches the brain, the soul, which interpenetrates the body, and is especially linked to the brain, does the registering or perceiving of the sensory impression (or indeed, spiritual reality). Hence instead of concluding that sense impressions (or spiritual dynamics in the inner life) have no objective existence or no existence outside of an observer, Steiner concludes that their existence is indeed valid, but that they can not have any existence in chemical or nerve processes.

---

<sup>384</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Geist*, 172, „Wenn der Äthervorgang seine Grenze überschreitet nach dem Leiblichen hin, dadurch daß der Leib ihm durch seine Krankhaftigkeit nicht den richtigen Widerstand entgegengesetzt, dann entsteht das, was man eine Hallucination nennt.“

In the 1880's in the course of his work as editor of Goethe's scientific writings, in the first volume of this material for *Kürschner's National Literatur*, Steiner writes of Goethe's opposition to a 'mechanisation' of the world, and humanity's perception thereof, and quotes in this regard, Goethe's verse from *Faust (Part One, 1936-1939)*, "Whoever seeks to recognize and describe a living thing, firstly seeks to drive out the spirit; then he has parts in his hand, but the spiritual link is missing, alas!"<sup>385</sup> Then, some years later, in volume four, in his comments on Goethe's theory of colour, Steiner reveals his conviction that the registration of sense impressions is due to an holistic factor,

It is impossible to build a 'living bridge' from the fact – at this point in space there exist certain movements of colourless material – to the other fact; the human being sees at this place the colour red. Only movement can be derived from movement. And from the fact that a movement becomes efficacious upon a sense organ and thereby upon the brain, it can only follow – from the mathematical and mechanical method – that the brain will be induced by the external world to make certain movements; and not that it perceives certain tones, colours, sensations of warmth, etc.<sup>386</sup>

Already in these conclusions, it is clear that to Steiner sense impressions must be carried within a living medium, a life-force medium, and from thence to the soul. In the following lecture extract, from his later, anthroposophical phase, Steiner elucidates

---

<sup>385</sup>*Deutsche National Literatur*, 114. Band, hrsg. J. Kürschner, *Goethes Werke*, dreiunddreißigster Teil, Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften, erster Band, hrsg. von Rudolf Steiner, (Berlin: Verlag von W. Spemann), *Begriff des Lebens*, XX1.

<sup>386</sup>*Kürschners Nat. Lit., Goethes Werke* Bd. 36, xii „Es ist unmöglich, eine <lebendige Brücke> zu schlagen von der Tatsache: An diesem Orte des Raumes herrscht ein bestimmter Bewegungsvorgang der farblosen Materie,– und der andern Tatsache: der Mensch sieht an diesem Orte Rot. Aus Bewegung kann nur Bewegung abgeleitet werden. Und aus der Tatsache, daß eine Bewegung auf ein Sinnesorgan und dadurch auf das Gehirn wirkt, folgt – nach mathematischer und mechanischer Methode – nur, daß das Gehirn von der Außenwelt zu gewissen Bewegungsvorgängen veranlaßt wird, nicht aber daß es die konkreten Töne, Farben, Wärmeerscheinungen usw. wahrnimmt.“

his theory, and is concerned with the supra-sensible aspects. The scientific details about the reception of light inside the eye is not his concern, these are not relevant to his theory, as it does not include the physical processes,

You can never seek the sense perceptions in the sense-organs themselves. What happens when the light of a flame meets my eye? This light exists within external space; the so-called ether waves are in motion from the source of light into my eye, these penetrate my eye, there they bring about certain chemical processes in the rear wall of my eyeball, they transform the so-called visual crimson, and these chemical changes continue on in my brain. My brain perceives the flame, it receives the impression of light. If another person could observe the processes which occur in my brain, what would he see? He would see nothing else than physical processes; he would see that which occurs within space and time; but in these physical processes occurring within my brain he could not see the light impression [*the image of the flame*]. This light impression is something other than a physical impression, which is the basis of the above processes. For the light impression, the image, which I must first create, in order to be able to perceive the flame, is a process within my astral body. Those who possess an organ for seeing such astral processes, see exactly how the physical phenomenon [mediated by the ether forces] in the brain, is transformed within the astral body, into the image of the flame, which we [then] register ... A sensory impression of light is thereby made possible, because as I have already said, ether vibrations enter into my eye, and these are transformed by my soul organism into an image of the light, and one cognises this light-image; it is in this way that I become aware of this light-image.<sup>387</sup>

---

<sup>387</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Spirituelle Seelenlehre*, 257, „Sie können niemals die sinnlichen Wahrnehmungen in den Sinnesorganen selbst suchen. Was geschieht, wenn das Licht von einer Flamme mein Auge trifft? Dieses Licht besteht ja im äußerlichen Raume darin: die sogenannten Ätherwellen bewegen sich von der Lichtquelle in mein Auge, sie dringen in mein Auge ein, sie bewirken gewisse chemische Vorgänge in der Hinterwand meines Augapfels, sie verwandeln den sogenannten Sehpurpur, und dann pflanzen sich diese chemischen Vorgänge in mein Gehirn fort. Mein Gehirn nimmt die Flamme wahr, es bekommt den Lichteindruck. Könnte ein anderer diejenigen Vorgänge, die sich in meinem Gehirn abspielen, sehen, was würde er wahrnehmen? Er würde nichts anderes wahrnehmen als physikalische Vorgänge; er

That is, he maintains that the ether-body bears the sense stimuli into the soul-permeated corporeality, where the soul-body cognises these. The following lecture extract presents Steiner's view with regards to spiritual vision, that any ideas which are glimpsed by the meditator as flashes of insight, without any tangible form or logical structure, are actually existing as images in one's 'ether-body',

This first stage of knowledge of the supra-sensible may be called 'Imaginative knowledge' ... then the person finally arrives at the point of ... developing a image-consciousness, not dreaming in images, rather being able to think in images ... this image-thinking does not descend into the corporeality, rather it is free and separate from one's corporeality ... then one can say from inner experience ... I experience myself as a person not only in a physical body, I experience myself as a person in an etheric body ...<sup>388</sup>

---

würde etwas wahrnehmen, was sich in Raum und Zeit abspielt; nicht könnte er innerhalb der physikalischen Vorgänge in meinem Gehirn meinen Lichteindruck wahrnehmen. Dieser Lichteindruck ist etwas anderes als ein physikalischer Eindruck, der diesen Vorgängen zugrunde liegt. Der Lichteindruck, das Bild, das ich mir erst schaffen muß, um die Flamme wahrnehmen zu können, ist ein Vorgang innerhalb meines astralischen Körpers. Derjenige, welcher ein Sehorgan hat, um einen solchen astralischen Vorgang wahrnehmen zu können, sieht ganz genau, wie sich die physikalischen Erscheinungen innerhalb des Gehirns in dem astralischen Körper umwandeln in das Bild der Flamme, das wir empfinden. Ein Lichteindruck wird dadurch bewirkt, wie ich schon gesagt habe, daß Ätherschwingungen in mein Auge kommen, daß sie durch den Astralkörper umgewandelt werden in ein Lichtbild, und daß man dieses Lichtbild als Vorstellung auffaßt; dadurch werde ich mir dieses Lichtbildes bewußt.“

<sup>388</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Was wollte das Goetheanum und was soll die Anthroposophie?*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1961), 274, „Diese erste Stufe der Erkenntnis des Übersinnlichen sei genannt die Imaginative Erkenntnis ... dann kommt der Mensch endlich dazu....ein Bilderbewußtsein zu entwickeln, in Bildern nicht träumen, sondern denken zu können .... dieses Bilddenken taucht nicht unter in die Körperlichkeit, ist frei und unabhängig von der Körperlichkeit...man kann dann aus innerer Erfahrung. .. heraus sagen: Ich erlebe mich als Mensch nicht nur im physischen Leibe, ich erlebe mich als Mensch in einem ätherischen Leibe ...“

This reference to the ether-body is of great significance for the question of resolving Steiner's insistence on the validity of perception; both for the sense-world and of the spiritual world. For the spiritual images, which the seer experiences are deemed to have an objective origin in spiritual realities. Nevertheless, Steiner does not maintain that this process is free of error; in the rhetoric of *Die Pforte* becomes clear that the acolyte is cautioned to treat initial higher experiences as possibly self-created. Accordingly, Johannes is unsure whether some of his experiences are 'genuine',

And much more have I seen with my organs of spirit, than what the senses first revealed to me in their narrow way. And the light of clarifying discernment shone in my new world. But whether a dream was dawning within me, or whether spiritual reality already encompassed me, I could not yet distinguish. And whether my spiritual vision encountered other things or whether I had only widened myself into a world, I could not tell.<sup>389</sup>

As noted in the Introduction, Steiner was quite clear that if his 'spiritual research' were to be acceptable in the modern context, then the epistemological objections to any type of 'higher' cognitional experiences, such as those portrayed in *Die Pforte* would need to be answered. Hence he undertook to explain his approach to harmonizing epistemology to the experience of spiritual vision, in the course of his lecturing on spiritual subjects, as we have seen.

In *Die Pforte* however, although many themes are presented in complex speeches, he does not introduce epistemological argument. The only exception is a brief reference in Scene One where the character 'Strader', who is an agnostic scientist, declares that the limits to cognition are unsurmountable;

---

<sup>389</sup>*Pforte*, 112, „Und vieles hab' ich noch gesehn mit meinen Geistorganen, was erst die Sinne mir gezeigt auf ihre enge (sic!) Art. Und klärend Urteilslicht erstrahlte in meiner neuen Welt. Doch ob ein Traum mir dämmerte, ob Geisteswirklichkeit mich schon umgab ich konnte es noch nicht entscheiden. Ob meine Geisteschau berührt von andern Dingen ward, ob ich das eigne Selbst mir nur zu einer Welt erweitert, ich wusst' es nicht.“

Though this admission can be very hard for him who would so eagerly learn things which are not knowable – at every glance, the limits to knowledge with their huge power do meet the thinker’s soul, whether he is looking out at the world, or into himself.<sup>390</sup>

Apart from inserting this speech by Strader in *Die Pforte*, Steiner does not take up the question as to the epistemological validity of spiritual vision any further, in terms of rational debate. Instead, he follows this theme through with Strader, who by Scene Nine has started to acknowledge, reluctantly, the validity of Johannes’ perceptions – as they come to indirect expression in his artwork. So, again, the validity and value of art on the path to spirituality is affirmed.

In his anthroposophical teachings, Steiner provides the answer to the question of the *modus operandi* whereby an accurate reliable perceiving of sense objects – or of intuitive thoughts and spiritual realities – by positing the efficacy of an ether-body. Steiner sees the solution to the epistemological conundrum regarding the validity of sense stimuli in the efficacy of the ether body. And consequently, spiritual perceptions are validated, because, as the above quotations indicate, the meditator, in experiencing a spiritual reality, in the first (and later) stages of higher consciousness, is functioning in his or her ether-body. The entire drama, *Die Pforte*, not only presupposes this, but it demonstrates that the ether body is essential to registering perceptions, and that the soul-body then becomes the actual recipient of these.

There is an additional significance to the ether-body in regard to the role of art in Steiner’s worldview. We noted in the preceding Section, that in Steiner’s view, part of the triune human spirit is the life-spirit, and that this in effect, is the ‘transformed’ ether-body. The concept of life-spirit bears a logical consistency to his view of the role of art in human life. It is the result of a ‘spiritualization’ process of the ether-body, but in Steiner’s holistic epistemological theory, the ether-body is the bearer of sensory impressions, including of course, artistic sensory stimuli. It follows from these

---

<sup>390</sup>*Pforte*, 30, „Wenn solch Bekenntnis auch recht hart der Seele wird, die allzugern ergründen möchte, was jenseits allen Wissens liegt: der Denkerseele drängt ein jeder Blick, ob er nach außen sich bemüht, ob man ins Innre ihn gerichtet hält.“

postulates that the exposure to art as a spectator will 'refine' the ether-body; no doubt, this process is more potent, for those who are artists. Similarly, exposure to ugly or discordant sensory impressions will coarsen it. A passage from an early lecture affirms these conclusions, and integrates them into the postulate of repeated earth lives,

An artistically formed musical composition, or a painting, is directly efficacious on the ether-body. A virtue is efficacious on the astral-body. Many fine people, returning [to an incarnation] from Devachan, encounter an ether-body which is not compatible to their advanced astral-body, because they have done nothing [in their previous lifetime], in the sense of beauty, towards an activity which improves the nature of their ether-body.<sup>391</sup>

To see the fuller implication of the above words, it is necessary to bear in mind that Steiner affirmed the ancient concept of the four temperaments. He maintained that the choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic and melancholic temperaments are valid and significant features of the human being's inner life.<sup>392</sup> These derive from specific energies in the ether-body. In view of Steiner's exposition of the ether-body as the bearer of the temperament of a person, this lecture extract has an additional implication, namely that the temperament or predisposition of the person returning to Earth will be coarser.

I conclude that Steiner's epistemological conclusions, evinced in his editorial comments on Goethe, that humanity possesses an inherently valid perceptual ability – both with respect to the sensory and to the spiritual realities – is based on a privately held postulate of the ether-body, or some form of proto-type of this. Further, I conclude that Steiner sees the value of art as relevant for this ether-body. In addition to the ability to convey a message in ways differing to, and enriching of, the conceptual medium, it also exerts

---

<sup>391</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Grundelemente der Esoterik*, (Dornach: RSV, 1972), 163, „Ein künstlerisch gestaltetes Tongebilde oder ein Gemälde wirkt unmittelbar auf den Ätherkörper. Manche edle Menschen, die aus dem Devachan zurückkommen, treffen, weil sie gar nichts getan haben zu einer im Sinne Schönheit organisierenden Tätigkeit, einen Ätherkörper an, der gar nicht zu ihrem fortgeschrittenen Astralkörper paßt.“

<sup>392</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Vor dem Tore der Theosophie*, lect. 6, (Dornach: RSV, 1978).

a refining effect upon the ether-body, thereby assisting in the development of part of the triune human spirit. Additionally, as a corollary to this, as a preparatory phase of this refining of the ether-body, artistic experience refines the temperament or pre-dispositional qualities of the person.

I further conclude that it is highly likely that Steiner in his earlier years, whilst writing on epistemology, was already persuaded as to the existence and efficacy of this ether-body postulate. It was very likely his concern about the fate of his academic work that prevented him from integrating a general 'theosophical' element into his dissertations at that time.

#### **4E: Steiner's holistic epistemological conviction that the limits to knowledge may be extended, is reflected in *Die Pforte's* portrayal of the efficacy of meditation**

As we have seen in the earlier section of the study, Steiner's philosophical writings sought to argue two primary postulates. One is that sense perception is valid and reliable, despite the acknowledged fact that sensory stimuli become physiological substances and electrical nerve energy inside the body. The second postulate is that the human mind has the ability to perceive the Idea of a perceived object, existent in a spiritual realm. This postulate defies the general conclusion in philosophical circles, as to the existence of 'limits to knowledge'.

It may be concluded that once Steiner took up the task of speaking on esoteric-spiritual subjects, in his new career with the Theosophical Society, he was open to the charge of forsaking or contradicting his earlier philosophical convictions. In 1903, Steiner began to produce his first articles for a Theosophical magazine, on various esoteric themes, including the theme, "Knowledge of the Higher Worlds, how is it attained". In October of that same year, however, he announced a series of three lectures on '*Die erkenntnistheoretischen Grundlagen der Theosophie*' (*The epistemological bases of Theosophy*).

In these lectures, he sets out to give his audience an overview of the main issues in epistemology in order to then demonstrate that an



extension to consciousness is possible. He begins by commenting that many of the audience have probably had their theosophical interests treated with some ridicule by friends and associates, who view it as dilettante, at best. He says his intention is to equip his listeners with the requisite philosophical skill, which their academically oriented contemporaries have acquired. Steiner comments that a contemporary philosopher would object to theosophical statements about beings and objects in spiritual realms (termed 'the astral plane') as being 'quite real'. He tells his audience that, such a person would tell Theosophists that they are making a mistake in believing that this is a true reality, saying, 'Don't you know that that, which we call our experience, is nothing other than our own mental image (Vorstellung)?' On this subject in his *Philosophie*, Steiner had quoted Eduard von Hartmann that perception is entirely subjective, "What the subject perceives are thus always only modifications of his own psychological conditions, and nothing else."<sup>393</sup>

It is his task in these three lectures to equip his audience with the means by which they can defend themselves from this position. The understanding of the term, 'mental image' and associated terms in Steiner's works, need to be noted here. These are explained in *Die Philosophie und Wahrheit und Wissenschaft*. To Steiner, the act of cognition commences with an inherently reliable perceiving of a sense object, which results in a person experiencing a 'percept'. This forms into a Vorstellung ('mental image') by itself. In the course of repeated formation of such images of the same object, the beholder may, and usually does, gradually form a 'concept'.

The 'concept' differs from a 'mental image' in that it encompasses an understanding of the inner nature of the perceived object, that is, the natural laws or properties operative within it have been discovered. Whereas a mere mental image enables only recognition of the fact that one has seen such an object previously. A mere mental image differs thus from a concept, and there is a third step, for the concept can be laboriously formulated into a complex 'idea'.

We have earlier considered Steiner's view that a cognizing person can experience intuitively the 'Idea' which relates to a perceived thing; and that these are also given – or rather can be given – in the moment of perception. However, the above process describes

---

<sup>393</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Philosophie*, 59.

the gradual formation of a concept, which in a fuller version of itself becomes an 'idea'. This does not stand in contradiction to his postulate of the (Platonic) Idea being received as the 'other half' of reality, the first part of it being the perceived object. In the instance where an Idea is perceived, a different process is active, wherein the concept is perceived directly, intuitively, and not logically formulated. Such intuitive access to concepts occurs in regard to higher, more transcendent realities, such as a spiritual being, or a religious-philosophical-spiritual tenet, as well as the holistic factor of a sensory object (for example the healing life-forces of a plant). So we are subject to the formulation of an 'idea' or the reception, intuitively, of an 'Idea'. In Section 2A, the question of language with regard to supra-sensible themes, and the difficulty of translating Steiner's terms were considered.

In these three lectures of 1903, Steiner then recounts briefly much of the ground covered in *Die Philosophie* concerning sense perceptions that we have noted above, in order to refute prevailing concepts. He cautions however, that the Theosophist can never take the attitude of 'various philosophers', namely that his or her specific worldview is the correct one. Instead, Steiner told his listeners that the Theosophist sees some truth in all religions, and in all the philosophical systems. However he makes it clear to the Theosophists, that one may trust in the validity of perception, and the idea that the perceived word-content is one's own mental image is an error. At this early stage in his esoteric-spiritual career he does not provide the holistic-esoteric basis for this conclusion. He then comments that nevertheless the world around about them is an illusion, in some respects, an attitude with which his listeners would be familiar from the traditional Oriental wisdom that had found a strong reception amongst the Society based in Adyar, India.

At this point in the lectures, Steiner has to resolve the looming problem of inconsistencies in his message, namely that the world is to some extent, an illusion – as many in his audience would have accepted that the real, the true, realm of being lies beyond the material level of being – and yet he was affirming that a deeply true reality was accessible to humanity. His solution is to clarify the underlying implication of his earlier philosophical works, namely that the human being, especially in moments of higher insights, can perceive the truth of a material reality through this process wherein

the two halves of reality (or 'the world-content') are perceived. This process, he tells his audience, includes a phenomenological dynamic in which the spiritual Idea of the object leaves its 'signature' on it.

Steiner refers to the philosophical concept of the 'thing-in-itself' in a general sense, that is, the Kantian postulate which as we noted earlier, effectively denies any bridging over to reality. He then provides an alternative perspective, using a simile of a sealing-wax stamp. He points out to his audience that the 'thing-in-itself' postulate creates a reality in which perceiving is like the process of stamping a seal into hot wax. The 'thing-in-itself' is the seal, and the mental image is simply its impression made in the wax, "Indeed everything remains outside of the substance of the seal, which has taken up only the impression of the seal."<sup>394</sup> The implication here that nothing of the real (Idea) of an object may be in a mental image is then argued against.

Steiner then introduces a concept which he sees as a well known, general mystical perspective, namely that although the barrier to perceiving objects truly is formidable, human beings perhaps have never left the objects, that is, they could be *in* the objects. He points out that this a pivotal thought of Theosophy, namely that our ego does not belong to us, it is not enclosed within our physical organism, but rather, our individual humanity is in fact a manifestation of the divine Self of the cosmos. He then elaborates this general mystical concept by saying that "within our thinking is something which extends beyond our ego ... the capacity of thinking derives from the primal foundation, the Spirit." This term, 'primal foundation' occurs in *Die Pforte* in Scene Four, as we noted in Section 3F, "What a strange being! ... from what primal foundation of the cosmos do such beings come into being?" ("... welch sonderbares Wesen! ... aus welchem Weltengrund erstehen solche Wesen?"). It has the general connotation of the realm of the spiritual, in effect of the Platonic Idea, as we saw in our consideration of Steiner's *Credo*.

---

<sup>394</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Spirituelle Seelenlehre und Weltbetrachtung*, (Dornach: RSV, 1972), 128, „Vom Siegel bleibt alles außerhalb der Substanz, die den Siegelabdruck aufnimmt.“

On the basis of these considerations, Steiner then returns to his simile of the wax stamp, concluding that although nothing of the substance of the true object may be in the wax impression, it does bear however, the person's name. Similarly, he argues, the Idea endows the perceived object with its imprint, namely the associated Idea. Steiner then emphasizes that the spiritually striving Theosocan attain to this deeper and more empowered form of thinking through a meditative process.

This activity activates a spiritual consciousness which is able to discern the fuller primal reality indicated by the impression of the seal. He tells his audience that subjective elements are overcome in this process, and objective reality can be discerned by such empowered thinking, derived from the Spirit. Therefore, he concludes, it is not correct that all truths which one obtains in this way are subjective products, derived from the personal ego,

Nothing in the field of wisdom is associated with your ego. Because you can raise yourselves to an objective thinking which is enclosed within itself, you can also form objective judgements about the world ... in our [intuitive] thinking is something which is above our ego.<sup>395</sup>

Steiner finishes his lectures on the subject by concluding that "The right way is the way itself; above all, it is that which had been placed over the door to the Greek temples, 'Know yourself'. We are one with the universal spirit."<sup>396</sup>

We have seen how this ancient Greek inscription is used as a very prominent device in several scenes of *Die Pforte*. This maxim resounds repeatedly as a chorus, in several scenes as Johannes, the main character in the drama, seeks to attain to higher consciousness through a meditative state.

---

<sup>395</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Spirituelle Seelenlehre*, 133, „Nichts im Felde der Weisheit hat mit ihrem Ich zu tun. Weil Sie sich zu einem objektiven, in sich geschlossenen Denken erheben können, können Sie auch objektiv über die Welt urteilen ... Denn innerhalb unseres Denkens ist etwas, das über unserem Ich liegt.“

<sup>396</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Spirituelle Seelenlehre*, 137, „Der Rechte Weg ist der Weg selbst, vor allen Dingen derjenige, der über den griechischen Tempeln gestanden hatte; Erkenne dich selbst. Wir sind eines Wesens mit dem Weltengeist.“

A few months after he gave his lectures on a theosophical approach to epistemology, Steiner published his basic manual on extending cognitional faculties through meditative techniques, referred to above. This is his book, *Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse der höheren Welten?* (*Knowledge of higher worlds, how is it attained?*). This text does not enter into the questions concerning the inherent reliability of perception, in the philosophical sense, but proceeds on the basis of the accuracy of perception, including that of a spiritual visionary nature.

The following year, Steiner published two further volumes which elaborated in more detail the soul exercises, such as *Die Stufen der Höheren Erkenntnis* (*The stages of higher knowledge*), *Ein Weg zur Selbsterkenntnis des Menschen*, (*A way to self knowledge of the human being*).

A decade later, 1914, Steiner published another philosophical work, *Die Rätsel der Philosophie* (*The Riddles of Philosophy*). This is a large volume that surveys historically philosophical perspectives from the ancient Greek times through to early twentieth century.<sup>397</sup> In the last chapter Steiner presents his anthroposophical approach. Again the audience will be primarily theosophists, owing to the new direction that his life has taken since 1900. In this last chapter he is concerned with the problem of the epistemological validity of his anthroposophy. He quotes a passage from his *Die Philosophie* where the divide between observer and the world-content is bridged through experiencing insights,

What is perceived is that part of the reality which is objectively given, the concept is that which is subjectively given ... The one factor appears to perception, the other to intuition. Only the connection between these two, the perception appropriately membered into the universe, is the full reality. The mere perception is no reality, rather a disconnected chaos ... the abstract concept does not possess reality – but contemplative observation certainly does, which does not consider one-sidedly the concept, nor the perception, but rather the connection of these two ... Whoever can make their own the points of view indicated here, wins the possibility, with his soul-life, to conceive of the self-conscious ego united with the fertile reality. This is the view towards

---

<sup>397</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Die Rätsel der Philosophie*, (Dornach; VRSN, 1961).

which philosophy through history has striven since the Greek age, and which shows its first discernible traces in the worldview of Goethe.<sup>398</sup>

In connection with the enhanced consciousness modality needed for direct cognition of supra-sensible realities, Steiner refers to Goethe's declaration that just such a new form of perceiving has to be developed which he refers to as a 'perceptive discernment', in order to behold such non-molecular aspects to creation. Steiner maintained that it is this kind of perceiving that he used in undertaking his research, and he quoted from Goethe's well-known essay, "*Anschauliche Beobachtung*" ('perceptive discernment'),

In his beautiful essay about 'Perceptive Power of Discernment', Goethe has pointed out that the human being, when it seeks to attain knowledge that is supportive of spiritual reality, must arrive at the point where he does not simply passively assimilate the external material world, but empowers himself inwardly, in order to be able to comprehend inwardly this spiritual reality, just as one from outside comprehends the external world through the senses.<sup>399</sup>

---

<sup>398</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Die Rätsel*, 600-601, „Die Wahrnehmung ist Teil der Wirklichkeit, der Objektiv, der Begriff derjenige, der subjektiv .... gegeben wird ... Der eine Faktor erscheint dem Wahrnehmen, der andere der Intuition. Erst der Zusammenhang der beiden, die gesetzmäßig sich in das Universum eingliedernde Wahrnehmung, ist volle Realität...die bloße Wahrnehmung ... (ist) ... keine Wirklichkeit, sondern ein zusammenhangloses Chaos ... Nicht enthält der abstrakte Begriff die Wirklichkeit; wohl aber die denkende Beobachtung, die weder einseitig den Begriff, noch die Wahrnehmung für sich betrachtet, sondern den Zusammenhang beider. Wer die hier angedeuteten Gesichtspunkte zu den seinigen machen kann, gewinnt die Möglichkeit, mit seinem Seelenleben in dem selbstbewußten Ich die fruchtbare Wirklichkeit verbunden zu denken. Das ist die Anschauung, zu welcher die philosophische Entwicklung seit dem griechischen Zeitalter hinstrebt und die in der Weltanschauung Goethes ihre ersten deutlich erkennbaren Spuren gezeigt hat. “

<sup>399</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Geist und Stoff, Leben und Tod*, 28, „In seinem schönen Aufsatz über „anschauende Urteilskraft“ hat er hingewiesen darauf, wie der Mensch, wenn er zu einer das Geistige stützenden Erkenntnis streben will, dazu kommen muß, nicht bloß passiv die äußere stoffliche Welt aufzunehmen, sondern sich innerlich so zu erfassen, um

In the concluding pages of his book, Steiner emphasizes that the capacity for such a condition of being able to experience the archetypal Idea inhering to the perceived object, requires an extended consciousness. He refers to soul exercises, similar to those in *Knowledge of the higher worlds, how is it attained?* through which the soul develops special organs (in the aura or soul-body) for perceiving in the spiritual. It is through such inner exercises that meditation becomes effective, because the meditant attains the ability to contemplate deeper themes in a higher state of consciousness. In *Die Pforte* a good description of how Steiner views this process is given in the spirit voice of Scene Three, a passage which we examined in Section 2A,

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.

Steiner instituted a schooling process in meditation for Theosophists (Anthroposophists) in 1904 which ran until 1914, when World War One brought this activity to an end. He taught his approximately 1,000 students that a text or symbol for meditation must be something that proclaims actual 'spiritual' reality that is, a reality that transcends the sense-world. The actual component-ideas in the verse may be readily understood, and these of necessity would have to contain words which also refer to earthly concepts. Terms such as 'light', 'heart', 'wisdom', 'pure' could be in such a text.

The implication of Steiner's teachings on this theme is that to him, although the component words are understandable in themselves, the over-all 'statement' that the verse or symbol is conveying nevertheless must transcend logic. It must be ineffable, that is inaccessible, to the logical rational intellect. This he maintains is the essential point; our intellect's logical ability must not be able to completely comprehend and analyse the meaning of the material used for meditating. It is not a question of Steiner teaching some-

---

erkenntnismäßig dieses Geistige innerlich so zu fassen, wie man von außen her die äußere sinnliche Welt durch die Sinne erfaßt.“

thing that is ineffable, nor communicating such to the student's mind, since by definition that is not possible.

Rather, the concept which Steiner is advocating here is that an initiated person, an enlightened spiritual teacher, attains to the state of consciousness which confers the ability to comprehend truths which are transcendent. Secondly this person has the ability to compose a text, the words of which en-clothe or perhaps 'encrypt' such truths. This concept as such is not alien to the mystical traditions of humanity, in that texts in Scripture are regarded as having such a quality, these 'divinely inspired' texts are thought of as inspired by God. The difference with Steiner is that such texts can be composed by an initiated person, however as we have seen, such a person has access to the Platonic realm of the Idea, and as such, through the office of the hierarchies, this person is in effect, in communion with God. This concept is expressed in *Die Pforte* at the end of Scene Three, in the episode where Maria leaves her body, and Ahriman speaks through it. Johannes perceives that this is what has happened. Benedictus affirms his perspicacity and gives him a meditation text, commenting that it will give him the key to the Heights.

The light's weaving Being, it shines through widths of space, to fill the world with Being. Love's blessing, it en-warms the cycles of time, invoking revelation of all worlds. And spirit messengers, they unite the light's weaving Being with soul-revelation: and when the human being can unite its own self with both, it is living in spiritual heights.<sup>400</sup>

The meaning of such texts, Steiner maintains, can gradually be discovered by the meditant through accessing the power of intuitive insight; this is achieved by gaining access to the ether-body. It is here that the cosmic thoughts, or divine truths are reflected. The accessing of such a level of thinking requires the meditant to use the higher consciousness states to which Steiner refers in his book,

---

<sup>400</sup>*Pforte*, 75, „Des Lichtes webend Wesen, es erstrahlet durch Raumesweiten, zu füllen die Welt mit Sein. Der Liebe Segen, er erwärmet die Zeitenfolgen, zu rufen aller Welten Offenbarung. Und Geistesboten, sie vermählen des Lichtes webend Wesen mit Seelenoffenbarung; und wenn vermählen kann mit beiden der Mensch sein eigen Selbst, ist er in Geisteshöhen lebend.“



*Knowledge of higher worlds, how is it attained?* In this regard, Steiner considered the first fourteen verses of the Prologue to the *Gospel of St. John* to be a good example of a text suitable for meditation. This text contains such phrases as, “In the beginning was the word”, “the word was with God”, and “the word was God”.

It is immediately obvious here that although logical thinking can analyse the component-ideas in these verses, the full significance of the statements is not comprehensible to the logical mind. For the referent of ideas that these words are proclaiming is in a spiritual sphere, their meaning derives from higher realms and dynamics than those of the mundane world. This is even more so with the following words in this same text, “In him was life, and that life was the light of human beings.” The separate nouns used are comprehensible in themselves, but the overall implication of the sentence as a coherent entity is not comprehensible, not fully explicable. According to Steiner, it is precisely this quality of eluding the deductive thought process, whilst conveying – or attempting to convey – a meaning which deals with spiritual beings and realities, which enables these verses to be a meditative text.

In public lectures given in 1921, Steiner takes up the task of presenting the higher consciousness, or higher thinking, which leads to spiritual wisdom. Steiner elucidates the nature of this anthroposophical enhanced perceptiveness in terms of enhanced thinking, which one achieves by the soul exercises. He describes it as ‘morphological thinking’,

... the usual thinking is a combinational type, a type which brings into association the separated objects. We need this type of thinking for normal, healthy living, we also need it for healthy normal science. But that kind of thinking which is required in addition, for knowledge of higher worlds, and which one attains through such exercises; that is a thinking which I would like to call morphological thinking, thinking in forms. This thinking does not stay in space, this thinking is indeed the kind which lives in the medium of time, in the same way that the other thinking lives in the medium of space.

This kind of thinking does not join one concept to another, this thinking places before the soul something like a conceptual organism ... it is so inwardly mobile that continuously brings forth one form out of the other. It is this morphological thinking which has to be added to the other, and to which one can attain through such meditation exercises, I

have indicated these in principle, these make the thinking stronger, more intensive. With this morphological thinking, one attains to the first stage of supra-sensible knowledge, namely that kind that I have designated as 'Imaginative knowledge' in my books.<sup>401</sup>

A little later in this lecture from 1921, Steiner describes the kind of extended cognitional capacity which is implied in *Die Pforte* in more detail;

... [a kind of] inside-out thinking, supra-morphological thinking... a thinking that has its own inner life ... a thinking which has its own [morphological] growth, wherever one concept arises from its predecessor ... that which lives in the spirit can not be comprehended by mere combinational thinking, it has to be apprehended by an inwardly vivified thinking. A thinking which lives not only in thought-forms which metamorphose, but a thinking which also has the ability to turn the formation of the interior inside out and to thereby change its form ... I remember in this connection, that Goethe saw a metamorphosis, a transformation, of the vertebra of the spinal column in the

---

<sup>401</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Die Wirklichkeit der höheren Welten*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1962), 48, „ ... das gewöhnliche Denken ein kombinierendes ist, ein solches, das auseinanderliegende Gebilde zusammenfaßt. Dieses Denken brauchen wir für das gesunde gewöhnliche Leben, brauchen wir auch für die gesunde gewöhnliche Wissenschaft. Dasjenige Denken aber, das zum Behufe der Erkenntnis höherer Welten hinzukommen muß, und das man durch solche Übungen erringt, das ist ein Denken, welches ich nennen möchte das morphologische Denken, das Denken in Gestalten. Dieses Denken bleibt nicht im Raume stehen, dieses Denken ist durchaus ein solches, welches im Medium der Zeit so lebt, wie das andere Denken im Medium des Raumes. Dieses Denken gliedert nicht einen Begriff an den anderen, dieses Denken stellt vor die Seele etwas wie einen Begriffsorganismus ... es ist so innerlich beweglich, daß es eine Gestalt aus der anderen hervorruft, fortwährend wächst. Dieses morphologische Denken, das ist es, das zum anderen Denken hinzukommen muß, und das man durch solche Meditationsübungen erlangen kann, wie ich sie im Prinzip angedeutet habe und die das Denken verstärken, intensiver machen. Mit diesem morphologischen Denken, mit diesem Denken, das in Gestalten, in Bildern verläuft, erringt man die erste Stufe der Erkenntnis übersinnlicher Welten, namentlich dasjenige, was ich in meinen Schriften die imaginative Erkenntnis genannt habe.“

individual skull bones....One enters into a reality which exists beyond time and space. <sup>402</sup>

In effect, Steiner's approval of the Goethean Platonic Idea stems from his conviction that Goethe was somehow inherently able to attain to this supra-morphological state of thinking, and thereby bridge the gap (the River) to the Idea. Steiner explains the role of this bridging intuitive faculty as follows,

The development of the powers and capacities which are slumbering in humanity, namely [the capabilities effective in] meditative thinking, which lead into the spiritual world, rests on nothing other than the lively following through of the inner metamorphoses of the powers of the soul. ... the person who wishes to become a spiritual researcher attempts to so arrange his perceiving, that he can repeatedly guide the will – which usually *slumbers* within perceiving and mental picturing – into his perceiving and mental picturing in such a way that he can voluntarily invoke the presence of these. As a result, what is usually merely weak thinking or imposed perceiving, can be transformed into Imagination, into pictorial beholding. For the spiritual can only be beheld in a pictorial form. The will and the feeling, which normally can be pictured mentally, but not apprehended in their actual true nature, are metamorphosed through the meditative life itself, so that they become mental-imaging life, perceiving life.”<sup>403</sup>

---

<sup>402</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Die Wirklichkeit*, 56-59, „...umgestülptes Denken, übermorphologisches Denken...ein innerlich lebendiges Denken..ein Denken das ein eigenes Wachstum hat, wo immer ein Begriff, ein Gedanke aus dem anderen hervorwächst. Dasjenige was lebt aus dem Geiste heraus, kann man nicht erfassen mit der bloß kombinierenden Denken, das muß erfaßt werden durch ein innerlich lebendiges Denken. Ein Denken, das nicht nur in sich verändernden Gestalten lebt, sondern ein Denken, das in der Lage ist, die Gestaltung des Inneren nach außen zu kehren und dabei die Form zu verändern ... Ich erinnere daran, daß Goethe ... hat eine Metamorphose, eine Umgestaltung der Rückgratswirbel in den einzelnen Kopfknochen gesehen ... man kommt in eine Wirklichkeit, die jenseits von Raum und Zeit liegt.“

<sup>403</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Das Ewige in der Menschenseele*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1962), 93, „Die Ausbildung der in dem Menschen schlummernden Kräfte und Fähigkeiten des meditativen Denkens, das in die geistige Welt hineinführt, das beruht auf nichts anderem als auf dem lebendigen Verfolgen der inneren Metamorphosen der Seelenkräfte. Auf der einen

However, Steiner did not advocate one indefinable state of higher spiritual awareness which bridged over the gap between this physical realm and the spiritual. He taught his students that there are three modes of spiritual perceiving; he termed them, Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition. At the first stage, that of 'Imagination', the meditator develops some psychic tendencies, and may experience visions, the primary attainment is that of holistic insights being detected, even if only faintly, on the periphery of consciousness. The term 'Imagination' is prone to misunderstanding when read in an English text, since it commonly has a meaning associated with fantasy. In the English context, a more appropriate term for what Steiner wishes to convey would perhaps be 'Psychic Image Consciousness', because this is the term associated with the faculty of experiencing images, and with the concomitant 'insightful' thinking that such a consciousness mode exhibits.

These may not be able to be logically formulated, and may be quite tenuous; however, they convey deeper understanding of supra-sensible realities than one is normally able to have of life through logical thinking. But as consciousness becomes more enhanced, the second stage, Inspiration, is attained. This next stage, wherein thinking begins to merge with a cosmic spiritual 'thinking' which is understood to underlie creation, is termed 'Inspiration' because, as Steiner explains, the way in which this stage of consciousness perceives the actual spiritual realm is akin to an infusion, absorption or inhaling process, one also breathes in the spiritual wisdom, so to speak. But again the term 'inspirational' whilst acceptable in German, is ambiguous in English; it appears that in

---

Seite versucht derjenige, der Geistesforscher werden will, sein Vorstellen, sein Wahrnehmen so auszugestalten, daß er den Willen, der sonst nur schlummert im Wahrnehmen und Vorstellen, in dieses Wahrnehmen and Vorstellen immer wiederum so hineinführt, daß er dasjenige, was als unwillkürliche Vorstellung auftritt, willkürlich sich vor die Seele ruft. Dadurch verwandelt sich dasjenige, was sonst blosses Denken oder aufgezwungenes Wahrnehmen ist, in die Imagination, in das bildhafte Schauen. Denn das Geistige kann nur bildhaft geschaut werden. Das Wollen und das Fühlen, die sonst zwar vorgestellt werden können, aber nicht in ihrer eigentlichen Wesenheit erkannt werden, die werden durch das meditativen Leben selber umgewandelt, so daß sie vorstellendes Leben, wahrnehmendes Leben werden“.

English such a phrase as 'Spiritual-Idea Consciousness' more clearly expresses the concept Steiner wishes to express.

At this second stage, the acolyte can begin to experience the archetypal thoughts more directly, and in this sense, the spirit is beginning to suffuse the soul with its radiance. That the result of Johannes' quest for spirituality will be in effect, an inner illumination, as a necessary concomitant of attaining 'higher thinking' is indicated in many places in Steiner works, for example, "... cosmic thoughts are that according to which divine powers have created the world ... they pervade the cosmos as rays of energy", and, "cosmic thinking is that true thinking which pervades the cosmos like rays of energy in it."<sup>404</sup> Steiner identifies these cosmic thoughts as the Platonic Idea, they are described as "having created the physical body over ages, thus in the body cosmic wisdom is slumbering."<sup>405</sup>

In this second stage of higher consciousness, 'Inspiration', instead of experiencing a psychic vision, Steiner explains that the meditant becomes directly aware of spiritual realities in the Platonic realm of Ideas. This second stage brings an enhanced experience in which the visual radiance and colours are maintained, but in addition, an audible element is added. He maintains that a new splendour shines from the soul world, and the new tones are heard which derive from spiritland. The implication here is that hearing of cosmic resonances occurs, so what was previously 'only' a supernal radiance, now becomes an auditory experience, and in indeed in two ways.

Firstly, there is the sense of specifically resonated tones, in particular, the famous 'music of the spheres'. The meditant may now attain to perceiving the 'tones' that resonate from the celestial orbs. Secondly, when an entity perceived in the spiritual realm, it is also now perceived in a deeper sense, in a (spiritually) audible sense, as if its inner nature is speaking to one. Steiner comments in a lecture from 1907,

---

<sup>404</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *G/A* 93, 204 & *G/A* 84, 78-83.

<sup>405</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *G/A* 96, 302, „Der Weltengedanke hat durch unzählige Zeitenläufe gewirkt, er hat in der Natur gewirkt, um zuletzt die Krone all seines Schaffens zu bilden: den menschlichen Leib ... in dem menschlichen Leibe schlummert nun die Weltenweisheit ...“

... in the consciousness[state] of Inspiration, the human being will see deep, deep into the nature of the beings, when he is in this consciousness ... the human being does not only perceive in coloured imagery and forms, but also hears the essential nature of the other [entity] resounding and ringing.<sup>406</sup>

An actual experience of the higher kind is presented in Scene Nine, where Johannes can behold in spiritual realms, and there perceives as a star above him, his own higher self,

I feel how my thinking penetrates into deep foundation of cosmic existence; and how, radiant, it shines through it. Thus is the efficacy of these words, O man, experience yourself! From radiant heights a being shines upon me, and I feel as if I have wings to raise myself up to him, I will to free myself, as does every being that conquers itself.<sup>407</sup>

It is significant that in the first level of enhanced consciousness, Johannes sees (not with physical eyes, but via his ether-body) images and beings, whereas at the higher level, he begins to sense that his thinking is entering into the source of thought itself. In this developmental process Steiner's above view of spiritual encounters is didactically portrayed.

The first stage of higher consciousness – that depicted in Scene Two, has given Johannes the power to behold other beings, and also his lower self. It is immediately after the encounter with Theodosius that Johannes mistakes Benedictus, (who is approaching, but not yet discernible), for an evil spirit. The implication of this is that if the soul of Johannes were more purified, then his perceiving

---

<sup>406</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Die Theosophie des Rosenkreuzers*, (Dornach: RSV, 1979), 91, „Tief, tief hineinsehen wird der Mensch in die Natur der Wesenheiten wenn er in diesem Bewußtsein lebt, dem Bewußtsein der Inspiration ... Der Mensch wird nicht nur wahrnehmen in Farbildern und Formen, er wird die Wesenheit des andern tönen und klingen hören.“

<sup>407</sup>*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! Aus lichten Höhen leuchtet mir ein Wesen. Ich fühle Schwingen, zu ihm mich zu erheben. Ich will mich selbst befrei'n wie alle Wesen, die sich selbst besiegt (sic!).“

would be more accurate, it could have perceived on the level of Inspiration, and not have been deceived at all.

The third stage of higher consciousness is termed 'Intuition' in Steiner's system and he describes that with this faculty, it is as if one enters into the other being or whatever is being perceived, becoming one with it, that is, one intuits the core of the perceived object. And then, from within it, the meditant gazes outwards, almost as if one has become that being.

As Steiner explains of the meditant who reaches this stage, "In (the stage of) Inspiration he is aware that he becomes one with the deeds of a being, with the manifestations of their will, but only in Intuition does he merge with the beings themselves, beings which are self-contained."<sup>408</sup> Again, the Latin term, 'Intuition' is ambiguous in English, and perhaps an expression such as, 'Initiatory Oneness Consciousness' may indicate more clearly his intentions.

I conclude that *Die Pforte*, through its portrayal of the roles of Philia, Astrid and Luna in regard to Johannes' spiritual striving, expresses didactically the following primary element in his anthropology:

That the limits to knowledge may be extended through meditation, in a triune manner; in this the dynamics of the soul become transformed through the influence of the spirit. This process in turn invokes the help of the divine hierarchies, whose activities are an expression of the Deity. These beings enable the meditant to attain consciousness in the Platonic realm of the Idea, and thus consequently, the divided world-content – of perceived thing and originating Idea – is finally united. The portrayal in *Die Pforte* of the efficacy of meditation provides Steiner's students with the requisite validation of his early holistic epistemological conviction that the philosophically assumed limits to knowledge may be extended.

---

<sup>408</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Die Stufen der Höheren Erkenntnis*, (Dornach: RSV, 1979), 79, „In der Inspiration wird er sich bewußt, daß er eins wird mit den Taten solcher Wesen, mit den Offenbarungen ihres Willens; erst in der Intuition verschmilzt er mit Wesen, die in sich selbst geschlossen sind.“

**4F: A major element in Steiner's anthroposophy is an esoteric-mystical Christian perspective, in which a connection between conscience and the Second Coming – as understood by Steiner – has a discrete role.**

*Die Pforte* does not make extensive reference to Christianity; hence a detailed consideration of Steiner's Christology is inappropriate here. However, it should be briefly noted that Steiner advocates, from his own spiritual experiences, a form of Christianity in which Jesus and 'Christ' are two separate beings – although as a result of the Passion events, the two became united as one. To Steiner, the term 'Christ' is one which refers to a deity, the Logos of St. John's Gospel, whilst 'Jesus' refers to a human being, albeit the most sacred of all human beings. He views the beginning of the union of these two entities as occurring at the Baptism in the Jordan. Steiner's Christology is complex, and only a bare outline is given here. Steiner's conclusions that there is a deity and a human being involved, forming a kind of composite figure, is not new. This composite view of the Christian Saviour was present in various forms in the first Christian centuries, and became rejected under the general term 'Subordinationism'.<sup>409</sup>

One motivation for the inclusion of the Theodora episode is that Rudolf Steiner maintained that in the 1930's the Second Coming of Christ would occur. But as we noted in Section 3B, he understood it to be a discrete, ethereal phenomenon. He maintained that the process was one in which Jesus, who had become united to the 'cosmic Christ' since the Resurrection, would become perceptible to humanity, although not physically, rather in a form of higher seeing. Since to Steiner, Jesus was permeated by the deity, Christ, any cognizance of him would also imply in some subtle form, an encounter of the cosmic Christ, as well as of Jesus.

Steiner consequently argued that the perception involved was not physical, and yet neither was it spiritual, in the sense of traditional visionary experiences of Christian saints. Steiner understood these visions to be the result of clairvoyant visions in the traditional sense. Whereas he taught that visionary perceiving of the returned

---

<sup>409</sup>*The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. J. D. Douglas, (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1974), *Subordinationism*, 938.



Saviour would be an ethereal phenomenon. The visions would appear almost as tangible as a physical perception, and yet their locus would be an energy field, in which Christ-Jesus will assume an ethereal form. This conviction is put into the mouth of Theodora, in Scene One, where she makes the proclamation of the imminent reappearing of the Saviour. Theodora speaks here in a grammatically clumsy and complex manner, this is presumably to reflect her special condition. She has been transported into a visionary state, and is attempting to communicate back to what has become an alien, removed sphere, that of the earthly. Perhaps also the magnitude of the mystery of what she is beholding, is a factor as well,

He has united with the spiritual part of the Earth. But not able were human beings yet Him to behold, in a form of existence such as he reveals Himself, because eyes of spirit lacked to their being, which shall only be theirs in the future. But near is the future ...<sup>410</sup>

Steiner's position with regard to his exegesis of Scripture was that if the full range of nuances of meaning of the Greek text of the *New Testament* were carefully considered, his interpretation would not be conflict with the Biblical texts. His lectures included quotations from the Greek, sometimes several sentences in length.<sup>411</sup>

In his theological lectures on Biblical prophecies concerning the Reappearing of Christ, given after he wrote *Die Pforte*, he refers directly to the inclusion of the Theodora scene, indicating that he wanted to express the perspective that this event would have similarities to the Damascus encounter of St. Paul.<sup>412</sup> In this lecture, he proceeds to quote from the 'little apocalypse' of St. Mark, "And if any man shall say to you, 'Lo, here is Christ or lo, he is there', believe him not. For false Christs and false prophets shall rise and shall show signs and wonders ..." This text also states, "Take heed,

---

<sup>410</sup>*Pforte*, 37, „Er hat sich mit der Erde Geistesteil vereint. Die Menschen konnten schauen ihn noch nicht, wie er in solcher Daseinsform sich zeigt, weil Geistesaugen ihrem Wesen fehlten, die sich erst künftigt zeigen sollen. Doch nahe ist die Zukunft ...“

<sup>411</sup>For example in his lectures on *Exkurse in das Gebiet des Markus-Evangeliums*, 74, 79, 110 etc) and on *Das Matthäus-Evangelium*, 208, 211, etc).

<sup>412</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Exkurse*, 165 and *Matthäus*, 199.

that no person deceives you, for many shall come in my name, saying, 'I am He' ... take heed and watch", (Mk: 13:5 & 33,37).

Steiner then emphasizes in his exegesis of this text that Christ is not to return as a physical person. In other words, Steiner is arguing that the above text removes all persons as the possible returned saviour – the term 'persons' implying a human being with a physical corporeality. Steiner explains to his audience that, "It is important that we realize that it is our duty to comprehend Christ in the spirit ... and the attempt was made to explain this duty at the place in the *Portal of Initiation* where words are placed in the mouth of the seeress Theodora."<sup>413</sup> (emphasis mine)

It was Steiner's practise to refer to the Christian Saviour as 'the Christ' or 'the Christ-impulse', to emphasize the cosmic divine aspect of the Christian Saviour as the primary element of the composite being, Christ Jesus. In another lecture, after referring to the phenomenon of false Christs, he elaborated the possibility of the Reappearing not being recognized,

It is still to be seen whether humanity has developed sufficiently to be able to recognize the Christ in his full significance, precisely because he is revealing himself as spiritual. This will be the greatest test and trial for humanity, that the greatest impulse of our Earth is to reveal itself and say to them, you can only recognize Me if you do not simply talk about the spiritual, but know that the spiritual is more real, more actual, more valuable than the mere carnal material reality.<sup>414</sup>

---

<sup>413</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Exkurse* 165, „Wichtig ist es, daß wir einsehen, daß es unsere Aufgabe ist, den Christus im Geiste zu begreifen, daß wir begreifen müssen, wie sich für die verschiedenen Zeitpunkte in die Zukunft hinein der Christus offenbaren wird. Für unsere Zeit wurde versucht, diese Aufgabe anzugeben in den Stellen des Rosenkreuzermysteriums „Die Pforte der Einweihung“ in den Worten, die der Seherin Theodora in den Mund gelegt werden.“

<sup>414</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Das Ereignis*, 72, „Zeigen wird es sich müssen, ob die Menschen so weit sein werden, den Christus in seiner ganzen Bedeutung wieder zu erkennen, gerade weil er sich ihnen als Geistiges zeigt. Das wird die größte Prüfung und Probe für die Menschen sein, daß sich ihnen der größte Impuls unserer Erde zeigt und ihnen sagen wird: Erkennen könnt ihr mich nur, wenn ihr nicht bloß redet vom Geistigen, sondern wißt, daß das Geistige realer, wirklicher, wertvoller ist als das bloß fleischlich Materielle.“

In his exegesis of passages in Matthew's Gospel concerning the Reappearing, quoting from Matthew 24:43, " ... coming like a thief in the night", Steiner concludes that this verse infers a process of human consciousness 'growing into the spiritual world'. Therefore, Steiner argues, in referring to false prophets in this context, Christ wished to point out that a material conception of this process is decidedly wrong.<sup>415</sup> We have earlier noted that Steiner sees the effect of Christ as vivifying the conscience, and that it was only after the Theodora episode in Scene One that Johannes has his conscience stimulated, an event which at first plunges him into despondency, as he realizes his earlier moral errors.

In Section 3B we noted that in addition to the three Kings (three hierophants) and the three hand-maidens of the fair Lily (Philia, Astrid and Luna) another triune set of beings is implicit in *Die Pforte*. This additional set of three beings, to whom there is a subtle allusion, is composed of Lucifer, Ahriman and Christ. It is indicated in Scene Four by the fact that Johannes only encounters Lucifer and Ahriman after his conscience has been vivified, by the Theodora episode. Since Steiner sees in the conscience as such a manifestation of the divine in the soul, and its quickening as the increased efficacy of Christ in the soul, then just as Helena is a representative of Lucifer, so too, can Johannes, in his newly enhanced condition of moral integrity, be a representative of Christ. Hence when Lucifer and Ahriman appear to Johannes, the new triune set of characters is created.

The dramatic element of *Die Pforte* then becomes that of Johannes struggling with the challenges posed by the twofold opposing forces, but with the Christ influence subtly efficacious within Johannes. In view of the fact that *Die Pforte* also incorporates through its structure, allusions to Steiner's cosmology, it is also significant that this trinity of influences is present in Scene Four, as it is in this pivotal fourth scene of the seven scenes that the new element emerges, which carries the evolution power onwards. It is a central theme in Steiner's anthroposophy that the struggle of the spirit, represented by the Christ presence in the human soul, against Lucifer and Ahriman constitutes the primary spiritual

---

<sup>415</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Das Matthäus-Evangelium*, (Dornach: RSV, 1978), 203-4.

dynamic of earthly life. And it is from the outcome of this conscious ethical struggle that the new 'leaven' for the next phase develops; hence the occurrence of these thematic elements in Scene Four, the pivotal scene of the first seven scenes.

It is didactically very significant that this episode occurs just prior to Johannes becoming acutely aware of the voice of his conscience. The implication of this episode is that the awakening of Johannes' conscience is subtly stimulated by this revelation from the seeress, which has resulted in an enhanced efficacy of influences from Christ Jesus. In this sequence of events is the further didactic statement of a direct connection between the enlivening of the conscience and spiritual development, and hence of a link between Christ and the human conscience.

In various lectures Steiner maintains that the conscience is able to be vivified, and eventually transform, becoming the faculty of directly perceiving spiritual realities.<sup>416</sup> By the seventh scene, Johannes, as we saw, does succeed in attaining to the realm of the Platonic Idea. I therefore conclude that these rhetorical elements of *Die Pforte* are specifically didactic, expressing quintessentially Steiner's Christological convictions in regard to the relationship of the reappearing, ethereally, of Christ Jesus to contemporary spirituality, to the conscience, and the role of the vivified conscience in attaining to awareness of the realm of the Idea.

I conclude further that the appearance of Theodora in Scene Seven may be seen as alluding to an additional element in Steiner's view of cosmic evolution. In Steiner's cosmology, that same spiritual influence which acts as the initial catalyst at the commencement of each aeon, becomes active again in its last phase, consolidating which has been achieved.<sup>417</sup> It is now clear, that through Theodora's actions, Johannes' conscience is vivified, and that Steiner sees the conscience as a faculty which can become enhanced and transform into spiritual vision. Thus, in the seventh scene, Theodora, by confirming the attainment by Johannes to powers of spiritual vision, is in effect affirming and consolidating

---

<sup>416</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Der Christus-Impuls und die Entwicklung des Ich-Bewußtseins*, (Dornach: VRSN 1961).

<sup>417</sup>*Geheimwissenschaft, die Weltentwicklung und der Mensch*, 137-299.

that which she prophesied, and catalytically assisted to emerge, in Scene One.

**4G: The spiritual development process underlying *Die Pforte* is derived from the view of the human being as an interrelated septenary organism of body, ether-body, a triune soul, self and a triune spirit**

In his *Theosophie*, Steiner elucidates a model of human nature as sevenfold. To the physical body, Steiner adds an ether-body, which as noted in Section 1B2, maintains the life of the physical body. The third element enumerated is the soul, and it is a major postulate of Rudolf Steiner's view of the soul or human consciousness, that it is triune. As we have noted in earlier sections, commenting on Philia, Astrid and Luna, Steiner sees the soul as possessing three primary strands or elements, namely emotions, thinking, and volition. These three capacities form the basis of human consciousness, and exist in their own right, independent of the physical body. The structure of the body enables the soul to manifest and cognize them. The human being is then, an 'embodied soul', whose three primary dynamics are not produced by the body, but made manifest in it, precisely by means of its specifically designed, complex neurological and physiological processes.

Steiner's view of the soul as triune is a prominent element of his worldview, and he emphasizes this threefold quality by regarding the three strands of consciousness as separate souls. Hence the emotions become 'the sentient soul', intelligence becomes 'the intellectual soul' and the faculty of volition becomes 'the consciousness soul' (or 'the spiritual soul', an English rendering of his German term, 'die Bewußtseinseele', suggested by Steiner). To Steiner these three faculties of human consciousness have ontological integrity, they exist as separate entities in their own right. The independent manner in which Philia, Astrid and Luna conduct themselves in *Die Pforte*, as quite separate persons, is expressive of Steiner's view of the soul. As support for his view of the soul as triune, he refers in his lecture cycles, to a similar perspective

existing in earlier civilisations; namely in Biblical Hebrew, and in Classical Greek texts.<sup>418</sup>

One of these three souls in Steiner's worldview is called the 'sentient-soul' (die Empfindungsseele); it is the emotive faculty of the human being. In defining this term Steiner differentiates 'emotion' from 'feeling' – in its meaning of perceiving. Emotions are such qualities as happiness, sadness, jealousy, revenge, yearning, grief, delight, and so on. He acknowledges that these can also be defined as 'feelings', but the term 'felt' in normal use of language, can also refer to registering sense impressions. Elaborating on this, in order to establish his terminology precisely, he differentiates between emotion as an expression of the human being's consciousness, and feeling as the registration of a stimulus by that consciousness.<sup>419</sup> So 'feeling' is cognate with sensing, but 'emotion' with wishes and desires, etc. This is in contrast to normal use of the term 'feelings' which can be felt from without – that is from the physical environs via the body's sense system – or from within, through the registering of one's own emotion or thought, or volitional impulse. Hence one 'feels' an emotion, or a cold draught; one 'senses' a spiteful thought or the swaying of a tall building.

Steiner uses the term, 'the intellectual soul' (die Verstandesseele) when he is referring to 'thinking' as logical, rational, deductive intelligence. However, there is need for care here, when assessing Steiner's texts in this regard, for the term 'thinking' is also used of higher modalities of cognising, modalities that transcend logic. Logical thought is considered by Steiner to be a somewhat hollowed-out or silhouetted form of what thinking is in its real nature. So 'thinking' itself in Steiner's worldview has three aspects to it. It can manifest as logical thought, or as the process of forming mental images, and thirdly, as a higher 'spiritual' thinking, which is in effect, the apprehending of the content of the Platonic realm of Ideas. However, 'the intellectual soul' is a term which refers only to the normal logical modality of intelligence; he does not see an

---

<sup>418</sup>With regard to the Hebrew, he comments on three Hebrew terms as expressive of the three souls in *Die Geheimnisse der Biblischen Schöpfungsgeschichte*, (Dornach: RSV 1976), 181; and in regard to classical Greek, in *Das Lukas Evangelium*, (Dornach: RSV, 1977), 134.

<sup>419</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophie*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1974), 39-41.

inconsistency here, as he views higher spiritual consciousness as being, in part, the outcome of transforming logical thinking into its higher potential.

The third element of the soul is volition, and Steiner terms this soul, 'die Bewußtseinseele' (the consciousness soul), it is understood by Steiner to be the expression of an intuitive faculty. That is, when a person makes a decision to act, the consciousness processes involved need not have emotional nor logical components. Hence an act of will need not have its origin in an emotive or deductive process, the process can in fact occur within a fraction of a second.

It is difficult to define the actual consciousness processes that underlie an act of will, or volition. Steiner understands this inherent impelling force of the will to be an 'intuitive' one, that is, a faculty which sees into the core elements of the situation – namely the relationship of the person to the external world or to inner dynamic, which is impelling one towards action – and sizes up immediately the appropriate course of action to take.

He also maintains that the obscurity around this third soul-force is a necessary result of the fact that, although the will can be consciously engaged, it often operates subconsciously, or semi-consciously, within the human being. Furthermore, influences from the other two soul forces, the desires or logical plans, can be the actual sustaining force within a person's determination. Since these two are consciously experienced faculties, they may become intertwined with the elusive intuitive force, obscuring its role in any decision-making.

The complex philosophical questions of motive and inner freedom, with regard to ethics, which arise from Steiner's view of the will cannot be examined here; they form the primary themes of *Die Philosophie*, and are elaborated there from the viewpoint of ethical individualism. In brief, he argues there that the human being can become free, or know inner freedom, once he or she becomes a person who can will to do an action, which they regard as right, rather than being driven by motives of which they are unaware. For this to happen, the subconscious aspect of the will needs to become accessed, and he argues, this is possible, once the mind can attain to the realm of the Idea, for then, "in the will, an 'Ideal intuition' is efficacious" (*Philosophie*, 160-161).

We noted earlier, that in *Die Pforte* Luna is the representative of the will, and therefore she is representative of the 'consciousness-soul'. The lofty condition of 'moral intuition' is alluded to by Luna in the final minutes of *Die Pforte*, when she encourages Johannes with these complex words, "Du wirst dich selber leben dürfen, wenn Licht in deiner Seele leuchten kann (You shall be able to live as yourself, when light can shine within your soul)."

The fourth element of the human organism is the 'ego' or 'self', this is defined in *Theosophie*, as the name which we give to ourselves, a name which indicates awareness of oneself as a separate reality from the milieu in which one lives, and from other human beings. He maintains that it arises into being in the third year of life, and its presence is indicated by the use of the personal pronoun, "I", as from that time. Steiner views the sense of self as deriving from the reciprocally interrelated dynamics of one's personal way of thinking, of experiencing emotion and will. He sees the awareness of this selfhood as gradually awakening during infancy, through the infant experiencing a contrast between itself and the environs, by the impact of external stimuli. Prior to that, he maintains, the infant has awareness, but not self-awareness.

Consequently, the personal pronoun becomes an important indicator to Steiner, in his *Theosophie* he argues that every person can call a table 'a table', a chair 'a chair'. But with the designation "I", with this personal pronoun, this is not the case. No person can use this word to designate another person; each can only call himself "I". So, never can we hear the name "I" being used towards oneself, or of oneself, by another person. Through the fact that the human being designates itself as "I", one must within oneself be giving a name to oneself. He views the personal pronoun as a name for the sense of self, which arises from within this sense of self. Steiner then maintains that,

The 'I' as the essential being of man remains entirely invisible ... and this 'I' is the human being itself. This justifies the human being in regarding this 'I' as his true being. He may therefore describe his body and his soul as the sheaths or veils within which he lives; and he may



designate them as bodily conditions through which he exerts his efficacy ...<sup>420</sup>

In these words another aspect of the ego is implied, a spiritual core element that transcends his personality. Steiner emphasizes that there is another aspect to the ego, an aspect which also implies the presence, or at least indirect influence of, a transcendent spiritual element in human consciousness, this is the eternal self. Consequently, Steiner regarded the ego as not simply encompassed by the amalgamation of the above psychological dynamics, but as dualistic, comprising the conscious everyday sense of selfhood, and yet also susceptible continuously to the efficacy of the higher or eternal ego.

In a lecture on education, he gives a succinct explanation of the important role in the spiritual development of the person by the ego, in which it is a dualistic reality, "It is indeed precisely the task of this fourth member to refine and spiritualize the other three sheaths or members of the human being."<sup>421</sup> In a lecture on the nature of eternity and the human soul, Steiner takes up this theme, and opposes the traditional view of the human ego found in Buddhism. He is referring to the 'anatta' doctrine, in which the ego is really only the result of deeds done in a previous incarnation, and has no inner reality. In his lecture he doesn't refer to any specific doctrine or text, but the Buddhist principle of non-being (anatta) with regard to the ego is a primary theme in Buddhism,<sup>422</sup>

---

<sup>420</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Theosophie*, 66, „Das Ich bleibt als die eigentliche Wesenheit des Menschen ganz unsichtbar ... Denn mit seinem Ich ist der Mensch ganz allein. Und dieses Ich ist der Mensch selbst. Das berechtigt ihn, dieses Ich als seine wahre Wesenheit anzusehen. Er darf deshalb seinen Leib und seine Seele als die Hüllen bezeichnen, innerhalb deren er lebt; und er darf sie als leibliche Bedingungen bezeichnen, durch die er wirkt.“

<sup>421</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Die Erziehung des Kindes vom Gesichtspunkte des Geistes*, (Dornach; VRSN, 1981).

<sup>422</sup>Already in the Dhammapada the anatta concept is mentioned (verse 279), and it became elaborated in many Buddhist sacred texts, such as the *Mahayana Shradhotpada Shastra* section 2, and the *Lankavatara* text, chpt. 4; both in *A Buddhist Bible*, ed. Dwight Goddard, (London: George Harrap, 1956).

What Buddhism allows to play over into the present life, from the earlier one, that is only the deeds of the earlier life, the karma. According to Buddhism, it is the manner in which the deeds group themselves together, which invokes in each new life an illusory ego. Thus, in our new life, not an ego, only the deeds, only the karma, comes into play ... However this ego is a mere illusory centre-point. Therefore I should extinguish that which comes into life with the karma. Spiritual science says the reverse of this; the ego which appears there is the concentrating deed of the karma. And whilst all other deeds are temporal and are also balanced out in time, that deed of karma, which has lead the human being into ego-consciousness is not a temporal one. Consequently, with the ego consciousness something appears which we can only characterize in the way which have now, that is, that it constantly intensifies its own existence, and that we, when we appear again in existence, appear grouped around the ego.

Thus the Buddhist extinguishes the ego and only allows karma to have a validity, which works over from one life into the next, and creates there an illusory ego. Whereas the follower of spiritual science, for whom karma and ego are not the same, says; my ego departs from my present earthly stage with an inner intensification and will reappear in this new state in my next life, and it will then unite itself with the deeds of this next life. When I as ego have done something, then it remains united with the central point and proceeds with the deeds from life to life.<sup>423</sup>

---

<sup>423</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Menschengeschichte im Lichte der Geistesforschung*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1962), 474, „Was der Buddhismus aus dem früheren ins gegenwärtige Erdenleben herüberspielen läßt, das sind nur die Taten des früheren Lebens, das Karma. Wie sich die Taten zusammengruppieren, das ruft nach dem Buddhism in jeden neuen Leben ein Schein-Ich hervor, so daß in unser neues Leben kein Ich, sondern nur die Taten, nur das Karma hinüberspielt ... Jedes Ich ist aber ein bloßer Schein-Mittelpunkt. Daher muß ich auslöschen, was mit dem Karma in das Leben hereingestellt ist. Umgekehrt sagt die Geisteswissenschaft: das Ich, welches da auftritt, ist die konzentrierende Tat des Karma. Und während alle anderen Taten zeitliche sind and auch in der Zeit wieder ausgeglichen werden, ist jene Tat des Karma, die den Menschen zum Ich-Bewußtsein geführt hat, keine zeitliche, so daß mit dem Ich-Bewußtsein etwas auftritt, was wir nur so charakterisieren können, wie wir es heute getan haben, das heißt, daß es sein Dasein steigert und steigert, und daß wir, wenn wir wieder ins Dasein treten, um das Ich gruppiert wieder auftreten.

In this text itself, Steiner is already using the term, 'ego' to designate an intrinsically dualistic entity. For if the ego is a form of Buddhist illusory entity, then it cannot retain any formative link to its previous deeds, as ontologically, it doesn't have any validity, it will fade out at death. The ego which has effected influences on the Earth, is an earthly personality, but if it retains a link to those deeds, in such a way that the next lifetime brings an organic development from the past life, then such an 'ego' has to be an ontologically substantive entity. In effect, to Steiner the ego of every human being is at once a somewhat illusory personality and also an eternal spiritual reality; it is a composite being. The Youth in Goethe's tale is seen by Steiner as representative of the everyday ego, and yet also of the higher ego.

An interesting detail in Scene Seven indicates that this is in fact Steiner's viewpoint, and that he sees this same esoteric conclusion in Goethe's tale, which he wishes to maintain in *Die Pforte*. In this scene, Theodora reveals the past incarnations of Maria and Johannes, and the audience learns that Johannes, as a 'heathen' woman, was once in love with 'Maria', and this implies that he was able to be in proximity to her (who was then a male), at least in his own mind. Thus Johannes, as this tribal woman, experienced a comforting and sustained romantic mood during the infatuation. In *Das Märchen*, a very curious passage – inviting of an esoteric interpretation – indicates, discretely but definitely, that the Youth was once "thrice happy", because he had actually been snugly embraced by the fair Lily, at some undisclosed time in the past. This passage occurs when the Youth and the Old Woman are first approaching the Lily, and the Old Woman calls out, respectfully to her, describing the blessed circumstances of the harp, that the Lily is in effect caressing and playing, and then says, "Dreifach glücklicher

---

So löscht der Buddhist das Ich aus und läßt nur das Karma gelten, das von dem einen Leben in das nächste hinüberwirkt und dort ein Schein-Ich schafft. Während der Bekenner der modernen Geisteswissenschaft, für den Karma und Ich nicht eins sind, sich sagt: aus meiner jetzigen Erdenstufe geht mein Ich mit einer Lebenssteigerung hervor und wird als solches wieder erscheinen in meinem nächsten Erdendasein und sich dann mit den Taten dieses nächsten Lebens verbinden. Wenn ich als Ich etwas getan habe, so bleibt es mit dem Mittelpunkt verbunden und geht mit den Taten von Verkörperung zu Verkörperung. "

Jüngling, der du ihren Platz einnehmen konntest!”<sup>424</sup> This sentence means, “Thrice happy youth, you were able to take its place!” The verb here is in the imperfect, not the subjunctive case, so it is not a wish for the Youth to be with the Lily sometime soon, but a statement that he was once with her, and there was a triune blessedness condition.

The implication here is plainly that there was once a condition when the Youth was united with the Lily, and indeed he tells the Old Woman, when they first met, that he was really a Prince, but he had since fallen into a distressed state. This correlates closely to Steiner’s view that once the ego was united with the spirit, it was not subject to evil. He refers to this as the condition of the human self, prior to the Biblical Fall of Mankind. This condition prevailed in a evolutionary cycle prior to the time when Lucifer and Ahriman became active in human evolution.<sup>425</sup> The self and its (germinal) triune soul, at that pre-Fall of Man stage, was also able to be in the lap of the gods. It appears then, that this past life of Johannes in *Die Pforte*, as a person previously bonded in love to Maria, portrays not only the principle of reincarnation, but – similarly to the introduction of the child – it also serves to maintain the parallelism with the impersonal-allegorical thematic message of *Das Märchen*, as seen by Steiner.

Returning now to the septenary human being, the fifth, sixth and seventh members of the septenary human organism in Steiner’s writings constitute the triune human spirit. We noted earlier that in his *Theosophie* he maintains that these three members, existing in a germinal form, are separate from the ‘human soul’. *Die Pforte* incorporates a significant element in his anthroposophical worldview, with regard to the septenary human nature. In his advice on the subject of spiritual development, Steiner emphasizes that much preparation has to be undergone by an aspirant to higher consciousness. If this is omitted, then severe problems arise for such a person, and in any event, as *Die Pforte* portrays, there will be challenging times for the acolyte. In particular, Steiner emphasized that the attainment of genuine higher consciousness (and per-

---

<sup>424</sup>Goethe, *HA* Bd. 6, 223.

<sup>425</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Geheimwissenschaft, die Weltentwicklung und der Mensch*.

ceptions) demands a substantial ethical development before any enhanced cognitional capacities in the spiritual dimension of existence is attempted. In his book for aspirants seeking such developmental processes, *Knowledge of Higher Worlds, how is it attained?* he reiterates the following precept as the primary rule “When you attempt to take one step forward in knowledge of hidden truths, take three steps forward in the ethical improvement of your character.”<sup>426</sup>

The reason for the stipulation of three steps in ethical development, rather than another quantity, say, two or four, was not explained by Steiner. It seems clear that, given Steiner’s view of human consciousness as triune, that this rule affirms that the spiritualization process which enables initiation to occur, is based on the concept of spiritualizing the three primary dynamics in human consciousness. That is, thinking, emotion and will need to be ethically ennobled and attuned to the spiritual, if higher consciousnesses is to be attained. The triune spirit will emerge from its lower aspect, the triune soul. As we saw in Section 4E, in Steiner’s model of the sevenfold human being, the dynamic underlying the three souls – thinking, feeling and volition – can be subject to a spiritualizing process.

This process gradually brings the triune human spirit into being. In his lectures and writings on meditation and higher consciousness, Steiner maintains that it is the spiritualizing of these three consciousness dynamics – thinking, emotion and will – which leads to the development of Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition. That is, that within the dynamics of logical thought, emotional capacity and the capability for will, respectively, the potential for these three higher faculties are present.<sup>427</sup> This conclusion is supported by the role of the three women, Luna, Astrid and Philia in *Die Pforte*, for

---

<sup>426</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse der Höheren Welten?*, (Dornach: RSV 1982), 66 „ ... wenn du einen Schritt vorwärts zu machen versuchst in der Erkenntnis geheimer Wahrheiten, so mache zugleich drei vorwärts in der Vervollkommnung deines Charakters zum Guten.“

<sup>427</sup>Rudolf Steiner, *Das Seelenleben des Menschen und seine Entwicklung zur Imagination, Inspiration und Intuition*, in: *Was wollte das Goetheanum und was soll die Anthroposophie?*, (Dornach: VRSN, 1961), 67- 90.

they have to undertake activity without which Johannes cannot attain to spiritual consciousness, to the realm of the Spirit, the Idea.

In summary, underlying *Die Pforte*'s rhetoric is Steiner's view of the human being as a body-soul-spirit entelechy, which has in total seven elements to its constitution, providing the ego is counted as a single entity with dualistic qualities, not as two separate entities. In addition to the physical body, there is secondly, an energy organism that maintains the physical body, and sustains consciousness processes within the soul, to the extent that these are interlinked with the physical body. He designates this entelechy as the life force body or ether-body. Thirdly there is a soul, with its three consciousness dynamics. Fourthly, there is also an 'ego' or sense of selfhood, within which the eternal ego is active. Furthermore, the human being also possesses a triune spiritual element that is generally only present as a potentiality, and these constitute the fifth, sixth and seventh members. This triune spiritual element is commonly unsuspected, and is therefore usually undeveloped; it requires specific inner effort to awaken this. The emergence of the spiritual aspects of the human being occurs as effort is made to spiritualize the triune soul.