

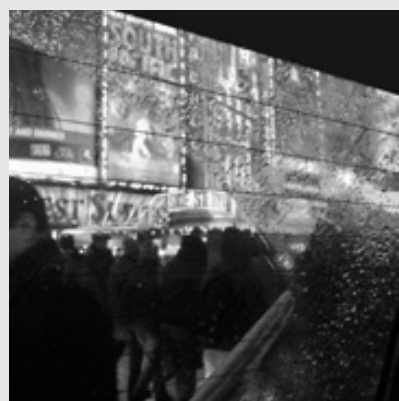
pentagram

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'Become passers-by,' such is the advice given in a logion in the Gospel of Thomas. Ah, in the raindrops that run down the windshield, the colourful variety of the exterior releases all its charm and attraction in the flowing together of the colours (see cover).

In terms of inner things, there is a need for people who are attentive to what happens and who know how to open up, because we knock at the door of the consciousness of the heart. Yet all too often, the passer-by does not hear the knock and turns away from the other, who has need of his soul power. He prefers seeing the many colours of the night that offer distraction over the task, the supportive word or the deed that might further help another. It is not a sublime knock from a divine power that humans do not know, but it is the request from your neighbour, from a friend, whom you cannot adequately help. It is the sorrow of a relative, when you stand by and observe and are powerless to alleviate the misery, even if you share the pain that oppresses him or her. How true is this question from Dag Hammarskjöld, the famous United Nations Secretary-General: 'Have you ever felt sympathy toward a person or thing other than yourself?'

Therefore this issue of **pentagram** – full of suggestions to open us to what is internal and to meet the other one. Argue with Kierkegaard, be inspired by Hammarskjöld, marvel over millions of LED-light-bulbs: hypermodern Japanese technology against a background of age-old Chinese wisdom.



'Stop complaining and use your spiritual imagination' © J.B. Wood, New York City

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world brotherhood day 2013

A Brotherhood Day service is not a commemorative service, during which we reminisce about bygone times. No, rather a Brotherhood Day service confronts us with the task of the time in which we are now living. Our Grandmasters did not leave behind a heritage that will nourish us until it has been used up – no, they passed on a power, a heritage that confronts us with concrete demands over and over again.

The actual realisation of the link with the Spirit through our mode of life is the task that we are supposed to translate continuously into the demands and the language of the moment. What are the demands of the time to which we should react? Conditions of life have changed drastically under the influence of the Age of Aquarius, particularly since the beginning of the new millennium. The ‘rock hard’, I-centred human being is being increasingly influenced. He loses his clear orientation and identity. As his fate is determined by the rapidly changing global ‘structures’ and the dynamism of the circumstances (for instance, the international financial system, the media, the unseen power structures), he now feels himself a minuscule cog in an incalculably huge and complex machine. We call these structures ‘aeons’, and we know that they represent a subtle form of control.

For example, most modern young people do not know where they will live in five years time. Flexibility is one of the most recognisable demands of our time. At the same time, the desire and the quest for meaning and identity through an individual, ‘private religion’ becomes ever stronger: I certainly believe in ‘something’. This perceptible, growing new soul potential (in the youth, with some





The archetypes of many people are going to awaken and begin to long for realisation. Then there should be a sphere in which this realisation becomes possible, in which people who are deeply touched can find their true selves

economic managers and also in world-encompassing organisations of like-minded people in the realms of science and art) becomes visible in ethical goals and is not focused exclusively on profit.

This coincides with the virtualisation or dematerialisation of daily life. An essential part of communication, even of life itself, develops in the virtual space of the internet. Buying and selling, relationships, holidays, even the acquisition of raw materials are conducted through this fictional world. Dematerialisation has already begun, and is in full swing. Not fewer but more and more people are seeking a spiritual home, seeking meaning and spiritual fulfilment.

How does the spiritual school react to the new time? A spiritual school must always accomplish its task in time. This is why it follows humanity in its course through time and change, simultaneously maintaining the link with the Spirit. It tries to develop the spiritual nucleus in human beings, and to this end makes use of changes and new circumstances as they occur. It approaches humanity with means that are accessible to people. They are different today than they were yesterday. Our Grandmasters, Jan van Rijckenborgh and Catharose de Petri, initiated a spiritual development which now, after 80 years, is to be deepened and spread further. Recently we have experienced that this change is accomplished during services and conferences.

THE TWO PIERS OF A BRIDGE This year, the *Fama Fraternitatis*, the spiritual testament of the classical Rosicrucians, will be 400 years old. For the Spiritual School, this fact provides a good reason to build a bridge between the impulse of 400 years ago and the tasks of the School in the present. Since the millennium, and particularly since the year 2012, this development has been occurring strongly in two ways.

On the one hand, there is the inner deepening of our spiritual work, increasingly opening us to the radiations of the Spirit that irradiate the world via each one of us and via our communal efforts. What matters ultimately is to partake consciously of the field of immortal souls and thereby to recognise, vivify and execute the assignment from the Brotherhood of Life. This development concerns the individual as well as the entire group, and is expressed by the fact that we have a growing group of pupils active in the Inner School. These pupils have a greater responsibility for the purity of the powerfield and the intensity of activity of the forces received from the field of the Brotherhood of the Living Body of our School.

We will continue and intensify this work with all means at our disposal. On the other hand, it is important to make the School step forward strongly and to link the Living Body with all those people who open themselves to the touch of the Spirit, each in their own way.

We also open ourselves to other groups, because we acknowledge their special task in this world. They speak another language and use other methods, but that does not exclude mutual acknowledgement. In this sense, an era of meeting together and mutual respect has started – without us giving up our own identity. Countless inspiring activities of the Rosicrucian Foundation, now existing in several countries, demonstrate this trend. Even if these activities touch people for only one day, nevertheless a germ of understanding is sown in them that may later germinate. In this way, we are nourishing a field that is important for the future of humanity.

SIMILAR TO THE WORLD? This activity is supported by the internationalisation of the work through the International Development Group (IDG) and the greater accessibility of our conferences and meetings to members and also to interested people. We may say that – seen from the outside – the borders of the Spiritual School have become more ‘transparent’, the thresholds lower and the discovery simpler. Seen from within, we are moving beyond seclusion and isolation from the world as we become increasingly aware that we do not live on an island, but that we should be working in and for this world – hereby fulfilling the words, being ‘in the world, but not of the world’. The anxious question that is asked by some pupils, due to these changes, is: ‘Do we not become similar to the world in this

way? Do we not thus forget the task that we, as spiritual school, have received from our grandmasters?’

We do not forget it, friends. Our grandmasters already announced this development, inviting us to offer our treasures to the world. They spoke of seven spiritual schools and of an effect that should deeply permeate the world. We follow this path because it is our heritage and our task. We accept this task without giving up our own identity that we receive through our inner work.

Now, after 80 years, the time of fulfilment (the harvest) has come. To use a saying of the Sufis: ‘A young tree must be protected, so that it is not eaten by the goats; but when it has grown, the fence around it should be removed, so that all can rest and work in its shade.’

We would like to emphasise that both developments – one turning inward and the one turning outward – are necessary. If we do not work in the world, for the world, then we merely follow a devout projection of our ‘pupilship’ which forms a convenient prison constructed from our own projections. And if we do not accomplish the inner deepening, then our work becomes flat and hollow. Then our work will be unable to reach any spirit-spark. Therefore, both activities belong together.

TRI-UNITY Does the structure of the Spiritual School change in this way? The seven-fold structure of the School does not change

in any way. We consider this structure to be a manifestation of the seven universal rays, which correspond to the demands and circumstances of time and space. In the structural model of all spiritual schools, the seven radiation activities are manifested in three main activities or work fields. This tri-unity is the basis of the organisation and the radiation activity of the School in all fields of the sevenfold hierarchy. Firstly, there is the Outer School that, to a certain extent, forms the gateway for the world and for people. This gateway should be visible, accessible and understandable for the many people who carry a living, vibrating spirit-spark atom within. We want to meet them.

The outer school and the many types of activities with which we work in the world provide possibilities for meeting these people and other groups. These meetings occur without reservation or judgment.

Secondly, there is the actual spiritual school, the mystery school. It is the laboratory, in which a start is made on the process of demolition of the I-centred human being, and in which the link with the spirit is realised in order to accomplish transfiguration. This field is a very special one, entrusted to us by our grandmasters, and we are responsible for preserving the purity and vitality of this field. This field gives us our identity and leads to the task of spreading the grail and its healing effects in the world. And so the moment



has arrived for every pupil to accept this task with all the power at his or her disposal. And thirdly, there is the universal field of the brotherhood, of which we all partake. The radiations of the Brotherhood of Life flow from this field. The idea of the activity of the Brotherhood is manifested in an abstract and directive way. This idea is received and further processed at every level until it can be translated into very concrete steps. In the universal field, all differences merge into a unity, namely the unity from which all impulses in time and space once originated, and still originate.

THE HOUSE IS REBUILT During last year's Brotherhood Day Service, we compared the structure of the spiritual school with a house that should – in order to be useful over

The spiritual school has matured.

Like the crane, she spreads her wings over the borders of countries and provinces, in order to free the message of Light in the hearts of all who are longing for it...

time – be renovated, that is, adapted to the times. While the supporting structure and the eternal foundations remain intact, walls are broken down and new doorways opened up; above all the staircase is moved to the centre. This image presents the continuously necessary alteration of the structure according to the universal building plan. What is most important now is that the new staircase is put into use, that the forces circulate from the top floor all the way to the basement; from above to below and from below to above.

The changes of which we were speaking are aspects of this reconstruction. During this reconstruction, the doors to the outside and the public rooms in which people are received – even for a short visit – are especially important. For this reason we would like to deal more specifically with the changes in the outer school.

Why are the changes in the outer school necessary? These changes are necessary in order to fulfil the mandate of the Spiritual School in this time. In this context, it is important to give the outer school a visible, accessible and ‘transparent’ form. To this end, it is necessary to clear away borders and barriers that might prevent seeking people from coming into contact with the School. A new direction of the orientation activities emerges from this, ‘translating’ the timeless truth into a language, into images and metaphors, that speak clearly to the seeker of today. What is offered is not

primarily learning material, but it is attuned to the experiences and life situations of people. In this new structure, we should also learn to deal with people’s hesitation to commit themselves for the long run or to enter into long-term obligations. We should not consider the fundamental causes underlying this change of behaviour to be problems, but rather see them as necessary and thereby an opportunity to leave behind the well-trodden paths. In this sense, we see flexibility as a possibility to give life a new direction.

Membership, as the first of the seven aspects of the pyramid, is a sphere in which people may sojourn to orient themselves for an entire lifetime. We become acquainted with them and they with us. Here they receive the necessary knowledge and access to the powerfield in order to taste and to experience whether there is an inner resonance. Here, at a certain, un-predetermined moment, the decision will be made, together with the accompanying pupils, whether the step to pupilship, and therefore to the living body of the school, is appropriate and desirable.

When the outer school works in this way, we will no longer need the preparatory and probational stages of pupilship. Then there will only be members and pupils in the outer school. All coming changes satisfy the hermetic principle of evolution, of the external opening and development. This principle follows the stage of involution, the stage with which

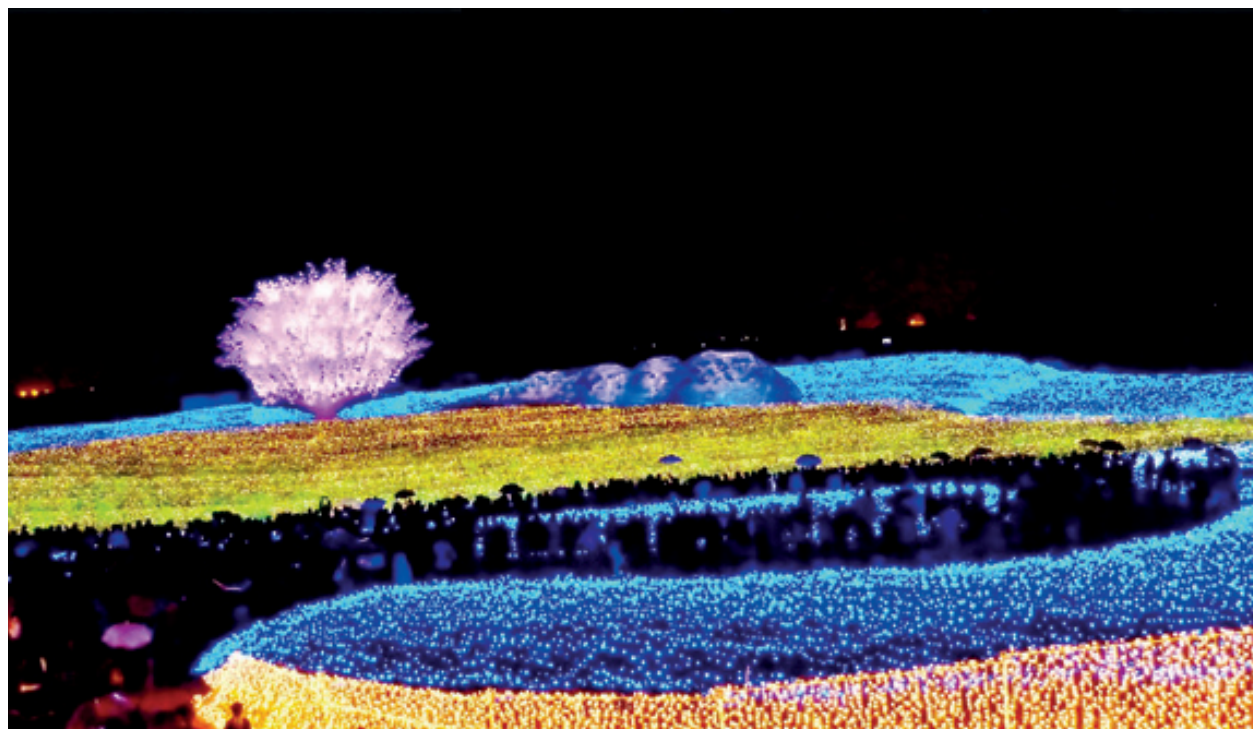
we were familiar at the beginning of this new century. This new principle demands a new and transparent relationship to others, a new and open communication with others, with humanity in general. We cannot shut ourselves off from humanity because we are part of it. Instead, as we exemplify the way of transfiguration, we should take humanity along with us.

ARCHETYPES Our work is important – not only for us, but also for the world. This applies not only to the workers, but to all pupils, because we open a path within ourselves, and thereby we testify that there is a path that truly can be walked. In this sense, if we feel, first of all, that we are human beings, and I-beings only in the second place, then we will receive the deepest inspiration, because the Brotherhood is focused on humanity. On the level of humanity, we are all one. With regard to all people, we are brothers and sisters. As workers, and also as members of the spiritual school, we should always be aware of this relationship. The complete awareness of this relationship is found on the level of the primordial image, of the spirit-spark atom. But also in our individual lives, we experience that we are all people, longing for our true identity, and that we are all far removed from the primordial source.

In this way, we enable the brotherhood to work in the world through us. This process will be very important, because in the com-

ing years, many people will be broken open through developments in the world field. Their archetypes will awaken and begin to long for realisation. Then there should be a sphere in which this realisation becomes possible, in which people who are deeply touched can find their true selves. Then they will perceive this sphere and receive and accept help from it.

The spiritual school has matured. The Brotherhood expects us to turn lovingly to the world. We have been called to turn the imprisoned Spirit into an active Spirit, so that it will change the world. ☸



*The path, you will follow it. The happiness, you will forget it. The chalice, you will empty it.
The sadness, you will hide it. The answer, you will learn it. The end, you will carry it.
Not finding an exit, the burning heat will transform coals into diamonds.*

Dag Hammarskjöld

Images: 'Tunnels of light' envelop visitors to the botanical gardens of Nabana no Sato situated on the island Hagashima near the city of Kuwana (Japan). The visitors have the sensation that they are walking through brilliant magical portals of light and colour. The effect is achieved through millions of twinkling LED-lamps that float on the ponds, that are installed on the spacious grounds, and adorn the gardens.

dao as source for inner work



During the Renova Symposium ‘The wisdom of the impenetrable Dao’ on July 1, 2013, Dianne Sommers spoke about an unknown but very classic text of ancient China, which we are pleased to be able to publish in **pentagram**.

Dianne Sommers

The *Nei-Yeh*, or ‘inner work’, is a classic Chinese text that originated some time prior to the *Dao De Jing*, that nowadays is dated at the beginning of the third century BC, so the *Nei-Yeh* text is slightly older, and is a text in which for me, after studying it, many lines converge.

At the time I discovered the *Nei-Yeh*, I worked as a physiotherapist and *Nei-Yeh* acupuncturist,



Taoists discuss 'the secrets of immortality' in a stone cave in the mountainside. The contrast between the smallness of the people and the grandeur of nature, a popular Chinese theme, is very nicely expressed.

Zhang Feng, 1658

and over the years had become more or less familiar with Chinese thinking in that field. At the same time I was eager to get more background for a deeper understanding of the reasons why all kinds of problems exist, why there are all kinds of difficulties for people, so I started studying philosophy, and definitely got some answers. In devoting myself to Chinese philosophy,

certain things became even clearer as I gained a more solid basis in Chinese thinking, and then when studying classical Chinese and the *Nei-Yeh*, the deeper underlying aspects started becoming clearer.

The time in which the *Nei-Yeh* is written is a very troubled time, a period of great turmoil in China; an era in which many thinkers and philosophers try to understand what is going

on and try to devise solutions for the misery caused by the many raging wars. The period of the Warring States is a time when many states are simultaneously at war with one another, but at the same time, this period of unrest and tension is a major formative phase for Chinese thinking.

The question that philosophers and thinkers of that time asked themselves was: how can we surmount this time; how are we to live in this time? It is a period in which a different sound is created and new perspectives are developed. Beside the demand for yet more weapons, more war, more infighting, there is also a search for a different way, for an inner path that offers the ability to take a firm hold of life in a different way. The *Nei-Yeh* deals with this theme and appeared in about 350 BC. The text tells of an inner route through which we as human beings can deal more effectively with the many kinds of issues we face. It is a document of which very little is known, which has to do with the fact that the text has been concealed within a much larger work, the *Guanzi*. This book is ascribed to the statesman *Guanzi* who, however, was certainly not the author. It is a kind of anthology written for the sovereign, containing advice on such topics as agriculture, how you handle matters concerning the state, health care and the like. One small chapter of the *Guanzi* is about the inner work. If we study the text carefully, we see that the *Nei-Yeh* is a key text on how to manage various affairs and events.

The concept of spirit – what forms the spiritual aspect of man – is viewed from a different angle so that you as human beings can utilise and apply the powers of the spirit more effectively. At the time of the *Nei-Yeh*, the general approach was that the spirit is an aspect outside of oneself, implying that the spirit (or *shen* in Chinese) is something separated from persons, in the sense of a spirit that is found in nature, as one distinguishes the spirit of the waters and the wind. The spirit was thus something not directly associated with human beings themselves. One obtained access to the spirits via the shaman, by sacrifices, by going to the altar and praying, then you hoped that the spirits of wind, water and cloud would appease favourably. So as a human one can seek to influence the divine aspect through dowsing, making sacrifices or praying, however, it is focused on something outside oneself. It is especially on this point that the *Nei-Yeh* shows otherwise. It does not say: you can influence that spirit outside yourself, no; you can invite that spirit to come closer to you; you can draw that spirit within. The moment you hold yourself in a certain way, the moment you compose yourself in a definite way, you can invite that spirit to stay with you, to penetrate deeper into you. You can do that through inner work, by taking care that the spirit does indeed want to remain with you. From the start the *Nei-Yeh* mentions the powers present in nature, the spirit forces present in the universe, spirit forces that are responsi-

Cannot be summoned by speech, yet can be welcomed
by awareness. Reverently hold onto it and do not lose it.
This is called developing inner power

ble for the creation of all things; this primordial force is the subject of the first lines of the *Nei-Yeh*:

‘All things are created by the essence or arch-power.

Here below the five grains.

There above the starry firmament.

In its movement from heaven to earth we call it shadow or spirit.

Who holds it in their bosom we call a sage or holy one.’

Someone who can obtain the spiritual aspect within, we call a sage. This person (or rather, their vital energy or essence) has a number of characteristics and features – just as we see in Dao – which cannot always be pinned down, but rather demonstrate a great diversity:

‘Therefore this vital energy is Luminous!

As if ascended in heaven;

Dark! As if descended in an abyss;

Vast! As if filling an ocean;

Inaccessible! As if dwelling high on a mountain.’

Thus it comes to expression in contrasts; in the greatness, the vastness, but also in brightness and darkness at the same time. And the text continues:

‘Therefore this vital energy cannot be held under force, but with the Power you can give it peace.’

Today we will encounter the important term ‘power’ several times. This is the translation of

the character *De* (or *Te*), that we also encounter in the book entitled *Daodejing* (or *Tao Te Ching*). So with the Power you can give rest to the vital energy:

‘Cannot be summoned by speech,

Yet can be welcomed by awareness.

Reverently hold onto it and do not lose it:

This is called ‘developing inner power.’

Forcing is impossible, you cannot compel her, but you can give her rest with the Power. The two terms ‘power’ and ‘awareness’ are apparently of essential importance. Power, the term *De* (or *Te* depending on which transcription is used), is a term for which we cannot give an unambiguous translation in English. It is a certain intrinsic power that is within the human being, it is an inner strength, something that is a force for good. In classical Greek and Latin concepts, we find it in the terms *arête* and *virtus*, which thus represent a force for the benefit of the good. Also you can read it as a ‘virtue’ in the old sense of ‘he is fit for that profession’. So we can describe it as an intrinsic power, yet it is something which is not yours alone. It is also an endowment, as the English say, something that is given to you, something that can be entrusted to you from heaven or where you can thus work via sacred objects. It is a potential or a force that is intrinsically linked to the heavenly. Certain substances carry that power in themselves. This may be associated with certain things,

In Chinese alchemy, the transfigured person is often compared to the crane, here in a magical-looking dance. You often see them in a group, or in flight in the sky, limitless, free and cleaving the open space in group unity

with certain matters but definitely also with humans, as a certain Power that allows them to accomplish something. So *De* or Power is that which achieves something, which gives the ability to create something and at the same time that power is always something that needs to be faithful to someone's original purpose, to that for which it is really intended, so that the true nature, the true destination emerges. The inner work revolves largely around this Power.

In this way, the Power is the outward manifestation of *Dao*, the way *Dao* (or *Tao*) can reveal itself in an inner nature, highlighting itself.

We see an example of this in *Laozi* 51:

'All creatures thus respect the Way (*Dao*) and honor its Integrity (*De*). No one demands that this be so. Their respect by nature ever flows.'

Something that is so by nature, that is so from itself, is referred to with the term *zi ran*. It is not something that is imposed from outside, there is no one who says what needs to be done, it is not a moral obligation, virtue is not to be seen in that sense. But it is something that allows the best in people to come forward, with an inherent strength, having an intrinsic force which is present therein. That was the first significant term: Power.

The second aspect that emerges in the phrase is: 'Cannot be summoned by speech.' In other words, you cannot order it, you cannot tell her come here, I want you. 'Yet can be welcomed by awareness'. Awareness is the term

Yi that is named, and this is another term that can be translated in many ways. This aspect is typical of Chinese thought: a picture is created, an image is presented. You can translate *Yi* with awareness, but it also can mean a focus, where you give attention, what determines your frame of mind, what determines your intention, what your desire is, what your idea is about something or what gives a particular track or a specific hint in one direction or another. And with that awareness, you can welcome that specific Power, which is a crucial element in the *Nei-Yeh*.

In *Lingshu* 8, a Chinese text dealing with medicine and acupuncture, we read that what allows us to perform our job is our heart. The heart is seen as the Emperor! This is the one who makes the decisions. What the heart remembers, what the heart holds, where the heart directs its attention: that we call *Yi*. The *Nei-Yeh* explains that our heart is the place where we can provide housing to the spirit (the source of power that we can recognise in the universe, the omnipresent spirit). Here, the spirit will actually find shelter.

'There is a spirit naturally residing within; One moment it goes, the next it comes...'

In other words, we should not assume that the spirit, by definition, will permanently stay with us.

'And no one is able to conceive of it. If you lose it you are inevitably disordered; if you attain it you are inevitably well ordered.'



The spirit thus has an important relationship with the aspect of orderliness in the human being: ‘Diligently clean out its lodging place and its vital essence will naturally arrive. Still your attempts to imagine and conceive of it. Relax your efforts to reflect on and control it. Be reverent and diligent and its vital essence will naturally stabilise.’ (So take good care of your heart so it is an anchor for the spirit and give peace to the heart so that its spirit will find shelter.) ‘Grasp it and don’t let go, then the eyes and ears won’t overflow and the mind will have nothing else to seek. When a properly aligned mind resides within you, the myriad things will be seen in their proper perspective.’

As a result of the inner work, the senses will function better, your physical quality as such

will become firmer. The essence that supports this process resides in a person when the heart is in order.

‘If your heart is in order, and thus the words that come out of your mouth are in order, and the tasks you perform and your instructions to others are in order, then the whole empire will be in order.’ This is a big step in thinking: if you arrange yourself well, then it will naturally be (*zi ran*) that the rest of the world will come to order, along the lines of: to change the world, start with yourself.

In Chinese thought, this is an aspect that has a lot of importance: the connection between the microcosm and the macrocosm. As said in the beginning, this connection was the main story that the philosophers told the ruler. Eve-



ry thinker dealt with this question: How do you work on a solution to the problem of the Warring States, the misery in which we sit. The answer that the *Nei-Yeh* sets forth herein is: start on the inside, start with yourself, because the moment you yourself are in order, the radiation of this will go into the world and the rest of the world will come to order. The microcosm is responsible for what is established in the macrocosm. A human being is not just a collection of various organs and different parts, but is seen as the point where heaven and earth come together.

The *Nei-Yeh* text also says: 'As for the life of all human beings: heaven brings forth their vital essence, the earth brings forth their bodies. These two combine to make a person.' From heaven we get that essence which gives you 'spirit', which gives you vitality, which gives 'life'. The earth gives you the shape and the two mingle with each other, whereby we as humans are the product of heaven and earth, becoming the mixture of the two, so the human as microcosm reflects the macrocosm. As a result, the microcosm is also directly related to the large macrocosm. You can see the macrocosm as everything that is in nature, everything that is present in the cosmic environment. In Chinese thought, the great source is often described as the whole of heaven and earth. An important characteristic of that whole is, as the Chinese say, *ziran*. In the classical sense there is not really

a term for 'nature', but we would translate it by what 'is naturally so'. The macrocosm, the natural happening, is that which is naturally so. In addition, it is seen as something that is circular in which everything returns, is eternal, lasts forever and knows certain regularities. This is the reason why the state and rituals bear as much as possible the characteristics of the macrocosm, to give a reflection of that big picture so that the properties of the macrocosm (such as regularity and eternity) can be expressed in the microcosm. The interaction between the macrocosm and the microcosm is a dynamic system. They influence each other and the question is: how can we understand the relationship? The macrocosm plays an important role with the stars and planets influencing the life of humans according to certain laws. Additionally, there are movements on the earth, the wind and the water, *feng shui*, that exert influences on humanity. The earthly forces also affect humans. Conversely, the human being, from its own microcosm, again affects the big picture. There is a Chinese image which gives a good idea of the position of the person in the entirety. You see a vast, enormous painting of nature. And you see in the back, very small, a person. That gives a good picture of the place of man in that great whole, according to the ancient Chinese.

With regard to the relationship of the microcosm (human being) with the macrocosm (the

Dao ke dao fei chang dao...

The way that can be spoken is not the eternal way

world around us), we have some questions. Such as: what may come from the outside world; what can enter in and is it possible to keep out anything at all? What determines the limits and to what degree are there 'border disputes'? So: how do we keep the balance between the macrocosm and the microcosm? Because this is what the *Nei-Yeh* speaks about, how you can influence the great macrocosm and the external world from the perspective of the human being, from your inner self. But how do they influence each other? The macrocosm, that nature, that cosmic whole, *zi ran*, she is 'naturally so'. That is 'just doing her thing'. It is different with regard to the microcosm. The microcosm, or human being, is degenerated according to the *Su Wen*. The quality of the human being has been reduced relative to its original potential, in that humans are less well-behaved nowadays. In this time people have changed their way of life. They drink wine like water; they immerse themselves in destructive activities, exhaust their essence and thereby reduce their vital energy.

For that matter, there is nothing new under the sun: it used to be better! (Keep in mind that the *Su Wen*, from which this quote comes, was written roughly around the first century BC.) The solution for escaping from the negative spiral which the *Nei-Yeh* gives is 'to model yourself on the higher-order'. The higher order is defined as heaven, as the One, or the Dao. By going the correct path, by walking the Dao,

we can find enlightenment. This is because the Dao, when you are walking it as you have to walk it, actually reflects the higher order. And then we are back on that Way which was mentioned this morning in the introduction to this symposium: you cannot say that much about it, but in the meantime a lot is said about it. That is often the criticism given to *Laozi* [Lao Tsu]: 'You say that you can say nothing about the Way, but why have you written a whole book about it?'

The *Nei-Yeh* says something similar:

'The Way never has a root or trunk, it never has leaves or flowers. The myriad things are generated by it; the myriad things are completed by it. We designate it the Way.' One can hear from the use of the language that there is a great deal of affinity with what *Laozi* tells about the Way.

The first lines of the *Daodejing* are (literally) on the street. On the pavement of the Wagenstraat in The Hague, we can read the first line of the *Daodejing*:

Dao ke dao fei chang dao ...

The first three characters: *Dao ke dao* means: the Way that you can go, the Path that you can walk (or even the Way that you can name – another way to translate the word Dao). Then *fei chang dao* says: that is not the permanent, constant, eternal or right Way. The moment you say, ah, now I have found it, this is what I need to have, what I need to capture, then it is not so.

The *Nei-Yeh* says something similar: ‘As for the Way, it is what the mouth cannot speak of, the eyes cannot see, and the ears cannot hear. It is that with which we cultivate the mind and align the body. When people lose it they die; when people gain it they flourish. When endeavours lose it they fail; when they gain it they succeed.’

Here we again find descriptions, no exact wording, but an attempt to conceive the essence of a particular characteristic. So we return to the Way (Dao) and its Power (De).

The last verse of the *Nei-Yeh* shows that the spiritual energy constituting the engine that keeps this process in motion has everything to do with the human heart:

‘That mysterious vital energy within the heart: one moment it arrives, the next it departs. So fine, there is nothing within it; so vast, there is nothing outside it. We lose it because of the harm caused by mental agitation. When the heart can hold on to tranquility, the Way will become naturally stabilised. For people who have attained the Way it permeates their pores and saturates their hair. Within their chest, they remain unvanquished.’

Here we also find the association with the immortal, that which never perishes. The Path is your personal path of life, follow your personal destiny and make sure that you feed your life and you will be able to continue your path. The *Nei-Yeh* has her own view, that is at

the same time very recognisable in the body of Chinese thought. The *Nei-Yeh* tells us how to find the essence of our own nature, emphasises the importance to follow our own nature, and how we can hold the middle ground. From the extremes out there, find your own middle ground and make sure your heart is in order to ensure that the spirit, which is outside, also wants to remain with you. Then the Power will inevitably be strengthened, your *De* will emerge.

As the *Nei-Yeh* says: ‘With a well-ordered heart within you, all under the heavens will submit.’ ☯

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When you have reached the point where you no longer expect a response, you will at last be able to give in such a way that the other is able to receive, and be grateful. When Love has matured and, through a dissolution of the self into light, become a radiance, then shall the Lover be liberated from dependence upon the Beloved, and the Beloved also be made perfect by being liberated from the Lover.

Dag Hammarskjöld

a royal looking glass for our day

The Chinese often call the world-renowned *Dao De Jing* by Lao Zi ‘a royal looking glass’. In the times in which Lao Zi lived, some centuries before Christ, the land we know as China consisted of a variety of states governed by as many different rulers. The dominant belief then was that they had received their mandate to rule directly from heaven. Emperors, kings and princes were supposed to live and rule in harmony with Tao. This they did by denying any self-interest. Thus they were not only a lodestone for their people but moreover the Force of Tao, the De, made it possible for the people also to live in harmony with Tao.

Human beings in those days still had little individuality. It was enough that their ruler lived in harmony with Tao and if so, they would follow him as a matter of course. Lao Zi gives the rulers of that age some remarkable advice, the essence of which is not to place themselves high above the people but on the contrary to place themselves beneath them.

A river can grow large only when it flows beneath all the little mountain streams. A riverbed will often run dry in times of drought – thus can it be filled. And if it overflows in

other times the land bordering it will grow fertile because of it.

And even the greatest river will ultimately flow into the endless ocean. This is only possible if the sea lies beneath the river. So it is with a king who can only be great if he places himself below his people, not above them, and is receptive to their needs.

Tao empties into the great ocean because Tao is low! Therefore all small streams always flow into Tao.

Many a century has passed since the time of Lao Zi. Since the age of the Enlightenment,

Lao Zi 39 advances:

That which is excellent has humbleness as its root.

That which is high has smallness as its base.

Bartho Kriek

Simplicity is the foundation for honour.

That which is low is the basis for that which is high.

John Willemsens

Lao Zi 66 expands on this:

Why is it that the great rivers and seas are the rulers of all streams?

Because they succeed in keeping themselves under them.

That is why they are the rulers of all streams.

Thus, if the master wishes to be superior to his people,

He must, in his speech, stay under them.

If he wishes to stand in front of his people

He must stay in the background.

That is how he stands above the people

And yet does not weigh heavily upon them;

And does he stand before them but yet does not offend them.

Thus his realm obeys him with cheerfulness

And does not grow tired of him.

Because he avoids all strife

There is no one that can do battle with him.

Henri Borel

The reason why all great rivers and seas maintain dominion over all the streams is because they succeed in being lower than all these streams

That is why they are rulers.

The reason why the wise one stands in front

is because he situates himself behind the people.

He stands above the people because he places himself under them

in his pronouncements.

Thus may he lead them

but the people do not find him oppressive

and he may direct them but will not harm them.

The world is content to come to him

and will never grow satiated.

Because he does not strive no one is able to strive with him.

Kristofer Schipper

APPROACHING THE ESSENCE



Tao is as water, says Lao Zi in verse 8:

The highest 'good' is like water.
Water does good to all creatures and does not quarrel.
It inhabits places that are contemptible to humans.
In this the excellent one approaches Tao.

J.A. Blok

To be like water, that is the ultimate.
Water is beneficial to all things without competing.
The masses despise its lowly place.
In this this water comes close to Tao.

Kristofer Schipper

Laozi 32

The place of the Way (Tao) in all-under-the-sun can be likened to those of the mountain streams and valleys with regard to the river and the sea.

J.J. Duyvendak

The Way (Tao) is for the world what the great river and the sea are for small rivers and streams.

Bartho Kriek

western people are no longer dependant on a ruler, should they still have one, but are taken up in a process of development in which they ultimately grow into autonomous human beings. If so, they will become 'rulers' in their own right and thus will have to solve the question of how to live in harmony with Tao. Modern commentaries on the *Dao De Jing* put it that 'the people' can be read as our own body with its organs, tissues, blood and hormones. Whether a human being may be regarded as a ruler metaphorically or literally, the criteria for realisation will still be the same. Zhuang Zi formulates them as follows:

Verily!

To be open and still,

In tranquil mildness,

In solitary calmness,

Not-doing,

Therein lies the basis of the ten thousand things.

To take up a subordinate position with these essences

*That is the Tao of the hidden sage,
The uncrowned ruler.*

(Zhuang Zi 13/1)

Not-doing means: not to do anything out of self-interest.

And Zhuang Zi continues:

He who is still like a wise man,

Who can move like a ruler,

Who is elevated because of his not-doing,

And will stay simple and unaffected

in his relation with the world,

Such a one can be surpassed by no one.

(Zhuang Zi 13/1)

Such a ruler prides himself on no accomplishment, he is simple and modest but above all he is tranquil. Because of this tranquillity he is able to live in not-doing, in *wu wei* as Lao Zi terms it. This is a path that will continue during one's entire life – a path on

As Lao Zi writes in verse 22:

That is why the holy one embraces the All
and makes it the lodestone for all-under-the-heavens.
He does not show himself
and therefore he shines forth.
He does not assert himself
and that is why he is present.
He does not boast of his powers
and because of this he succeeds.
He does not value his significance
and therefore he leads.
Verily, the fact that he does not compete with others
is the very reason why no one in all-under-the-heavens can
compete with him.
J.J. Duyvendak

Therefore: the sage embraces the One
and so sets himself as an example for the world.
He does not wish to shine forth
and that is why he is enlightened.
He does not wish to be the righteous man
and that is why he rises above others.
He is not boastful of his labour
but thus is he meritorious.
He does not value himself highly
and thus he is superior.
He does not quarrel or fight
And that is why there is no one in the world who can
resist him.
Henri Borel

which the old self-centred being will gradually
be replaced by a new Tao-attuned entity.

J. van Rijckenborgh says in this regard:
‘Although a human being in this stage still
has to make use of his old physical vehicle,
nevertheless he will rule his not-yet-fully-
realised realm with love and walk the Path in
wu wei, that is in self-denial.’

The one condition for the Path of wu wei is:
to be tranquil, but not an imposed stillness
because that originates from the will and
inevitably will have to be compensated by
extra commotion later. The tranquillity meant
here originates from our inner being. It is the
natural outcome when one is attuned to the
unchangeable centre of one’s heart. One ‘does’
this by not-doing, by not placing oneself in the
centre of things. Thus he will become empty

of self-interest, empty as a riverbed in a valley.
This emptiness is immediately filled with the
Power of Tao, the *De*.

J. van Rijckenborgh continues: ‘In transfigurism
the important pivotal point is self-denial, a
complete and total losing of the self. And only
from this loss will *It* be gained. It is the Tao.
It is the undefined, the yet undetermined of
the unborn divine human. It has nothing *from*
our old self and yet *It* must be realised by the
sacrifice *of* that self. That is the essence of this
enigma.’

The present ‘ruler’ can only be a ruler because
he is a servant, low as a river valley. This he may
accomplish because he has a Heart for Tao. ☆

Hart voor Tao, written by Elly Nooyen, may be used as a guidebook
for the reading of the *Dao De Jing*. Available in Dutch from the
Rosycross Press.

a garden of light

‘You are neither the oil nor the air,’ Dag Hammarskjöld* once said. ‘You are only the wick, the point where the flame produces some light. You are only the lens under a beam of light. You can only receive, spread and possess the light in the manner of a lens. If you look for yourself, you steal the transparency of the lens. Life reveals itself in the measure of your transparency – The faculty does not take you as the goal. And this is according to your progress as an instrument of service that you yourself will be known.’

With regard to living and working together, we can learn much from animals and plants, at least at first sight. The variety of combinations turns out to be surprising; an elephant and a mouse going off together is not extraordinary in a story, but in reality, it is less obvious. We human beings are stuck with a difficult handicap: the unique consciousness that formerly contained perspectives encompassing the cosmos has, over time, been overshadowed by a self-consciousness; we have become individuals. The origin of the word ‘individual’ means not-divisible, so we have to accept the whole person as they stand, any compromise is hardly possible. Thus it is likely that such a ‘centre of the universe,’ when it crosses our path, would collide with the ‘centre’ that we cherish and cultivate in ourselves. Living together with others is usually possible, although not easy. Working with others or in a group may be even more difficult. Is it even possible to work together? In the end, a collective project is accomplished by individuals. The harmony between the group and the individual largely depends upon how much space they give each other and how they view each other. A collective task may be managed either by an acknowledged leader from outside or from inside, animated by solidarity and enthusiasm. One can say: ‘I will draw up the plans’ and the other: ‘I’ll take care of the decoration’; the small pleasant woman who cleans may have a broader vision of work in progress and think proudly:

‘We build a cathedral!’ In this way the identity of an individual can rise above the sum of the individuals in the group. However, the course of things is not always so easy. Most of us have somewhere a small hurdle in our character which can magnify a small irritation, making a mountain out of a molehill. Many dreams, large and small, have turned into nightmares at the foot of this mountain; they sink in irritation and conflict, while it is in fact a threshold where a unique and unexpected human development can arise. In *The Admonition of the Soul*, Hermes gives this surprising advice: ‘Recognize the essence, but ignore the particularities. ‘This reflection will come to life only when it is released from paper. The defect that we see in another as something impossible is not the person we revere or love; it only represents a frozen point of the soul which does not reflect light. Many times it is up to us to exchange a part of the self for a part of the other, to move what we see as our own ‘centre’ towards the Other, towards the universal seed that lives and works within each of us and at the same time forms our unique identity, next to our place and function in the whole. The space the we free in our heart, the power and the glory of this Other, can grow, a process in which every disturbance can fade if we put it in perspective with a touch of mild humour. Thus, after being confronted with an immovable mountain, we now find ourselves in a garden of light. When hands, heads and hearts merge into a single body, each of the



members can achieve their task freely and autonomously, managed, in this case, by the centre, the spirit. We know it: where the Light can work in the individual, it also operates in the whole group. Because the Self is one. Here also the basic principle is 'to give and to take' – take your place and give yourself to the task that awaits. In this way we together build a Light Body, each in his own heart and also

collectively, with the group of those who are likeminded, known and unknown. All together we build a house Sancti Spiritus which also is called 'the temple in the middle'. In such a place, the light can exist equally for all. For in the Ordering of the Light, each and everyone has his or her place and task. ☸

* See the article about Dag Hammarskjöld on page 45



the fire of baal shem tov

The 18th century is very often described as the highpoint of European culture. The genius Johann Sebastian Bach was born in the beginning of this time period. Closer to the end of the 18th century outstanding persons like Voltaire, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and George Washington greatly influenced humanity. In the same time period, the legendary Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer (1698-1760) lived in eastern Europe (Poland-Lithuania). Also known as Baal Shem Tov or Besht, he gave a completely new direction to Jewish mysticism. He is considered to be the founder of the spiritual movement of Hasidism. His new spiritual ideas and ways of thinking and living have greatly influenced the spirit of the Jewish people. The author Martin Buber shows some of these wonderful perspectives in his book *The Legend of the Baal-Shem*.

A Baal Shem is a *Master of the Name*. Baal Shem Tov brought a glimpse of joy and inspiration into a time of unexpressed grief and misery. In countless Jewish communities, he was the spark that saved them from darkness and emptiness. His spark became a flame that illuminated the darkness. Through him Hasidic Judaism could flourish anew.

It is remarkable that he basically vanished unnoticed without leaving even the smallest autobiographical indications. We have no portrait of him, not even a document that would prove his existence. Once he remarked to a student who was taking notes during his lessons: 'There is nothing of me in your notes. You assume to have heard what I did not say. I said one thing, you heard another and what you wrote down is a third thing.'

He had experienced eternal life in his inner being, but for his fellow man it is only his legend that remains alive. Even though it is a legend, it resonates intensely into our time without losing its power.

Israel's father recognised his son's special gift early in his life. Shortly before his death he

said to him: 'Consider this my son, God is with you and you should fear only him.' And Israel himself later added to it: 'God watches. He is in all life, in everything. And everything testifies to his will. He decides how often a leaf will turn in the dust before the wind picks it up and carries it along.'

To distinguish him from previous 'masters of the name', 'Tov' (the Good) was added. Everyone knew him as Baal Shem Tov. He travelled through the country appearing in villages, forests and markets. He was unprejudiced. When he met someone interesting, he went to great lengths to include him in his circle of friends. He had a dislike for learned physicians. He said of them: 'They think that they can explain everything, although they can see only the surface of the illness.' He complained about the official rabbis: 'One day they will be so many that they will even hinder the Messiah in his Return.'

However he was known mostly as being benevolent, kind and thoughtful. He always said: 'As long the branch is not yet chopped off the tree, there is still hope. And also: 'You can

The vehemence of a pure heart surpasses that of a complex and inscrutable thought; the pride of knowledge is worse than ignorance. Seeking is more valuable than finding

rescue someone from the mud only when you yourself stand right in it.' Or: 'A small Tzadik likes small sinners, while a great Tzadik loves great sinners' (a Tzadik is a servant of God). And indeed there are many stories known about the conversion of sinful Rabbis and other people with the help of the Baal Shem Tov.

It was his principle not to judge anyone. He was there to help, not to condemn. He once said to his coachman: 'Please, throw away your whip. Because even if a horse would need to be punished, who says that you must do it?' He was not embarrassed to surround himself with lower class or even suspicious people. He felt more useful among common people than among socially recognised people. One day he witnessed an argument between his wife and her maid. When he noticed that the two women were getting ready to go to the court of the rabbi, he put on his Sabbath robe in order to accompany them. His wife asked him: 'Why are you coming along? I do not need your help.' The Baal Shem answered: 'You do not, but the maid certainly does. You are well known, but not the poor girl. Nobody will defend her.'

Imagine a palace with countless doors. Behind each door is a hidden treasure that every visitor may freely enjoy. How easily will the visitors forget the true reason for their coming, namely to see the king. He is waiting at the end of the long hallway to receive his

visitors that remained loyal to him and did not become distracted by all the treasures.

One day the Baal Shem remained longer than usual in deep prayer. Many of his pupils became tired and left. Next time the Baal Shem told them the following story. Imagine a very rare and beautiful bird in the top branches of a tree. A group of men formed a 'living ladder' so that one of them could climb up to catch the bird. But men at the bottom could not see the bird, lost patience and went home. The human ladder collapsed and the rare bird flew away.

Another time he explained the meaning of Hasidism and asked: 'Do you know the story of the blacksmith who wanted to be independent? He bought an anvil, a hammer and a bellows. When he started to work nothing happened. The forge remained cold. An old blacksmith that he had asked for advice told him: You have everything you need, only the spark is missing. And this, said the Baal Shem, shows what Hasidism is. It is the spark!

The Hasidic teachings and the life of the Hasidim are supported by four pillars:

hitlahawut, aboda, kawwana and schiflut.

HITLAHAWUT – THE FIRE OF ENSOULMENT It is described like this: If someone has a strong desire for a woman and looks at her, dressed in colourful garments, then his desire is not for her splendid and colourful clothing, but for the exquisiteness of the woman who is



dressed in it. In this way some people see only the ‘garments’ of this world, while others who truly yearn for God see, in all superficial things of this world, only the might and the power of the creator that lives in all and everything.

In the Spiritual School we call this yearning ‘longing for salvation’. *Hitlahawut* rises over all boundaries and limitations of dialectical life to become one with God. *Hitlahawut* is also the chalice of mercy or the eternal key to the Divine. *Hitlahawut* reveals the purpose of life in dialectics and at the same time it is the step to ascend to Eternity.

Angels rest in God, but the hallowed souls are continuously moving from eternity to eternity. They are leaving behind all dialectical ties and bonds. For this reason the hallowed stand above the angels.

ABODA – SEEKING AND ENCOMPASSING GOD, BEING IN SERVICE The mystery of mercy is unexplainable. Seeking and finding – a human

being’s lifetime is determined by it, not only for a lifetime but in unnumbered returns of the forlorn, longing soul. And yet: God wants to be sought. Would he therefore not let himself be found?

There is a suitable anecdote. Rabbi Baruch’s grandson, a member of the family of the Baal Shem, once played hide-and-seek with another boy. He waited for a long time in his hiding place, assuming that the boy was looking for him but not able to find him. After he had waited long enough he left his hiding place to show himself. He could not see his playmate anywhere. His friend had not even tried to look for him. When he realised that, he ran crying with disappointment to see his grandfather. He complained to him about the ignorance of his playmate and that he did not even try to find him. Rabbi Baruch said, with tears in his eyes: ‘God says the same about us.’

Humanity has to understand that our misery originates from the suffering of the Schechina, the imprisoned spirit spark of God. Human



In the point of rest at the center of our being, we encounter a world where all things are at rest in the same way. Then a tree becomes a mystery, a cloud a revelation, each man a cosmos of whose riches we can only catch glimpses. The life of simplicity is simple, but it opens to us a book in which we never get beyond the first syllable.

Dag Hammarskjöld

beings must be imbued by the knowledge that our misery and difficulties are also the misery and difficulties of the Schechina. Therefore one should not consider his or her own interests and problems, whether lowly or sophisticated, but instead should do everything to help the inner divine spark back to its original glory. Then everything will be solved by itself, also one's own misery.

With regard to prayer, the Schechina says: 'I am the prayer.' This is reminiscent of a cantata by J. S. Bach where it is sung: 'We do not know what to pray, but the soul within us prays with ineffable sighs.' Or 'Lord, you know my thoughts already before my mouth can even form a word.'

It is said that the Baal Shem once stopped on the door step of a prayer house and said full of reluctance: 'I cannot enter here because this house of prayer is already overfilled with prayers from bottom to top. His followers were wondering about this comment because for them it would have meant great praise. The Baal Shem explained to them. 'If the meaning of prayers is not addressed to the all-encompassing Highest, then the prayers cannot rise up and so will pile up on the bottom. So they just fill the whole prayer house with a big mess.' He continued: 'No prayer is more merciful and rises directly to heaven, than the prayer of a simple person who does not know what to say and only sends out his deep inner longing of the heart. This prayer is for God

like the song of a nightingale in his garden to a king. It means so much more to the king than the tribute of his counts and princes in his reception-hall.'

The Baal Shem emphasises how important it is for a spiritually striving being to keep the inner flame of devotion continuously alive and burning. 'Always keep adding to the sacrificial fire on the altar of your soul, then God himself will speak the sacrificial prayer.'

KAWWANA *Kawwana* is the mystery of the soul directed to its goal. There is only one goal. All paths have only one destination, only one end. Every detour will eventually arrive at this destination.

Kawwana is a ray of divine glory, a ray that lives in every human being and is directed at his liberation. And this is liberation, that the divine spark, the Schechina, will return from her exile. All earthly veils will be lifted, the transitory cloak will fall off through Gods glory. Then the divine spark, the purified Schechina, will become one with her only true lord. A truly sincere seeker will always live in anticipation that this glorious unification can happen at any moment – here, now, today. In his daily life, in everything that happens in dialectical life he will always have an awareness of how eternity radiates through time. She will perceive with her blood and entire being how eternity germinates in the fields of time. Such a human being cannot think of anything else than that now, yes now will come

However this is the path of salvation: that all souls and spirit-sparks that came forth from the original divine soul will follow their sunken, lost path through the dark and somber world to a good end and return to their home

the yearned for moment. The inner voice of eternity, growing louder, will urge him on. He will see the unfulfilled in everything, the misery and suffering of all beings speak to him, the wind brings him all the bitterness of the world. In the eyes of such a person the world is an unripened fruit. He himself is part of the divine glory, but if he looks at the world around him he sees everything in discord, strife and despair.

However this is the path of salvation: that all souls and spirit-sparks that came forth from the original divine soul will follow their sunken, lost path through the dark and somber world to a good end and return to their home. The Hassidim compare this with a king that begins the feast only when the last of the guests has arrived. All human beings are the dwellings of lost souls. The purpose of Kawana is at the same time for human beings to help their fallen companions to get up and liberate the imprisoned. While seeking and yearning for liberation he does not need only to wait, he can actively work for the salvation of the world.

This also is *Kawwana*; the: mystery of the soul

that is attuned to help to redeem the world. The Hassidim even say: 'Who prays and sings in holiness, eats and speaks in holiness and conducts daily life in holiness, through him or her the fallen sparks will be elevated and the fallen worlds will be redeemed and renewed.'

SCHIFLUT:ABOUT HUMILITY The humility that is meant here does not mean that someone humiliates and degrades himself. The greatest evil is that one forgets that he is in his deepest being the son of a king. One who is truly humble perceives the other One as himself and oneself as the other One.

A Tzadik once said: 'If the Messiah would come today and tell me that I am better than everyone else, then I would tell him that he is not the Messiah.' The truly humble seeker lives in every being and knows their nature and virtue. For him no being is different from him. He intuitively knows that there are hidden values deep inside of every human being. He knows that one day everyone will find their inner path.

He who lives in all beings in the mystery of humility is unable to pass a judgement on anyone else. One who judges another human be-



ing judges himself. One who turns away from a sinner remains guilty. A holy one will suffer the sin of his fellow being as it were his own sin. Human beings seek God in the solitary fire of their own souls, nonetheless there is a high service that can only be rendered in fellowship and lived in community with others. The more a human being is unified in this sense with others, the more she is willing and able to give. But our fellow human beings are limited in their ability to receive, for if you pour from a big barrel into a cup, the limit is set by the size of the cup.

A human being who has reached complete inner unity with the other One can take part in the salvation of the world. The farther a human being goes on the inner path of purification, the more vivid becomes the understanding and insight into the community of all beings, and he knows from deep within that he is a part of it. This is also the mystery of humility.

The Hasidism of Baal Shem denies any abstraction. If one loves only God and excludes human beings from it, he reduces God to an abstraction only. Only in unity can the mystery of love and the mystery of God be found. A Tzadik once said: 'How can you say that I am a leader in this century, when I feel more love for my kin and friends than for all other human beings?'

The Baal Shem said the following about fellowship: 'When a person sees that someone hates him, than he has to love him even more.

For the fellowship of the living is the wagon of Gods glory. If a crack opens on the wagon, it is important to repair it. If there is not enough love, so that the joints of the wagon come apart, then it is important to increase one's own love in order to eventually overcome imperfection. For a true helper it is self-evident to do what is needed.

If a fellow human being would like to sing but cannot raise his voice, then someone will come to help him find the right tone so that he can sing. This is the mystery of unity. To help is not seen as a virtue but rather as the deep connecting core of existence.

And so these four pillars of Hasidism form in truth the four-square of building.

The legend of Baal Shem Tov could be summarised in the mythos of 'I and Thou', the caller and the called, the transitory that goes under in the eternal and the eternal that needs the transitory. Only one who enters into the non-being of the absolute will encounter the guidance of the spirit.

As it is with the seed that cannot germinate before it has been accepted and transformed by the earth, so it is with the human being who longs for the other One to emerge. He has to use all his capabilities to reach the state of nothingness. Then God will awaken the new creation within. He will be like a well that never dries up or a stream that never stops flowing.

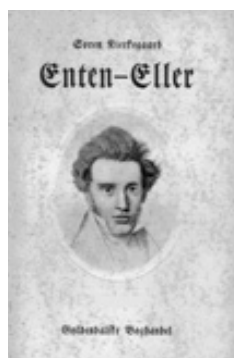
All of this shows that Baal Shem's concept of Messiah is very different from the concept in orthodox Judaism. Orthodox Judaism still waits for the return of the Messiah, whereas the Christus, omnipresent as a spark in every human being, could be resurrected at any moment.

In a conversation with Rabbi David, who arrogantly stated that his fiery faith and attitude could call the Messiah into appearance, Baal Shem Tov said: 'O Rabbi David, do you really think that you could grasp the Unfathomable with your power? Even if all this knowledge could reach to the highest spheres of heaven and, with a strong arm, become master of the Messiah's throne, do you really think that you could grasp and hold him like my hand is holding on to your shoulder right now? The Messiah keeps watch over the sun and celestial bodies in a multitude of appearances. And all planets turn towards him as they evolve. Everywhere is he the guardian of the growing souls and lifts the fallen sparks from deepest depths. As He is part of the daily silent dying,

He is also part of germination and birth. He ascends and descends daily.' Tears flowed from the eyes of Rabbi David. Such humility had developed in his heart and soul that his whole being was moved by it. The Baal Shem, noticing this inner change, concluded: 'So in this way you are able to help to lift up the fallen divine sparks. Rabbi, in this way you are in the Messiah and the Messiah is in you.'

We conclude this article with the son of Baal Shem Tov, Rabbi Hirsch. As successor to his father, he lacked the same power and became therefore a rather introverted person. But at night he asked his father in his dream: 'How should I serve God?' At that the Baal Shem climbed a high mountain and jumped into the abyss. 'Like this' said he. The next time he appeared as a mountain of fire that burst into thousands of burning pieces and he called: 'And like this!' ✪

the contrary thinker



Two hundred years after the birth of the thinker Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), interest in his work is growing, some of the lesser known titles recently being made available to a wider audience – which is no different than he expected.

Not hampered by false modesty, he knew through life itself that many would understand him only much later, and that primarily he was not writing for the people of his time. He was apt to define his fellow citizens as ‘examples of man in the masses,’ people who cannot be themselves because they don’t feel up to it. He raised the sword fiercely against their established views and broke radically with their common habits and customs, eventually turning away from the religious traditions of the state church and leaving them where they – mostly in name – belong. Middle class abundance and spiritual poverty did not help promote the spirit of true Christian thinking!

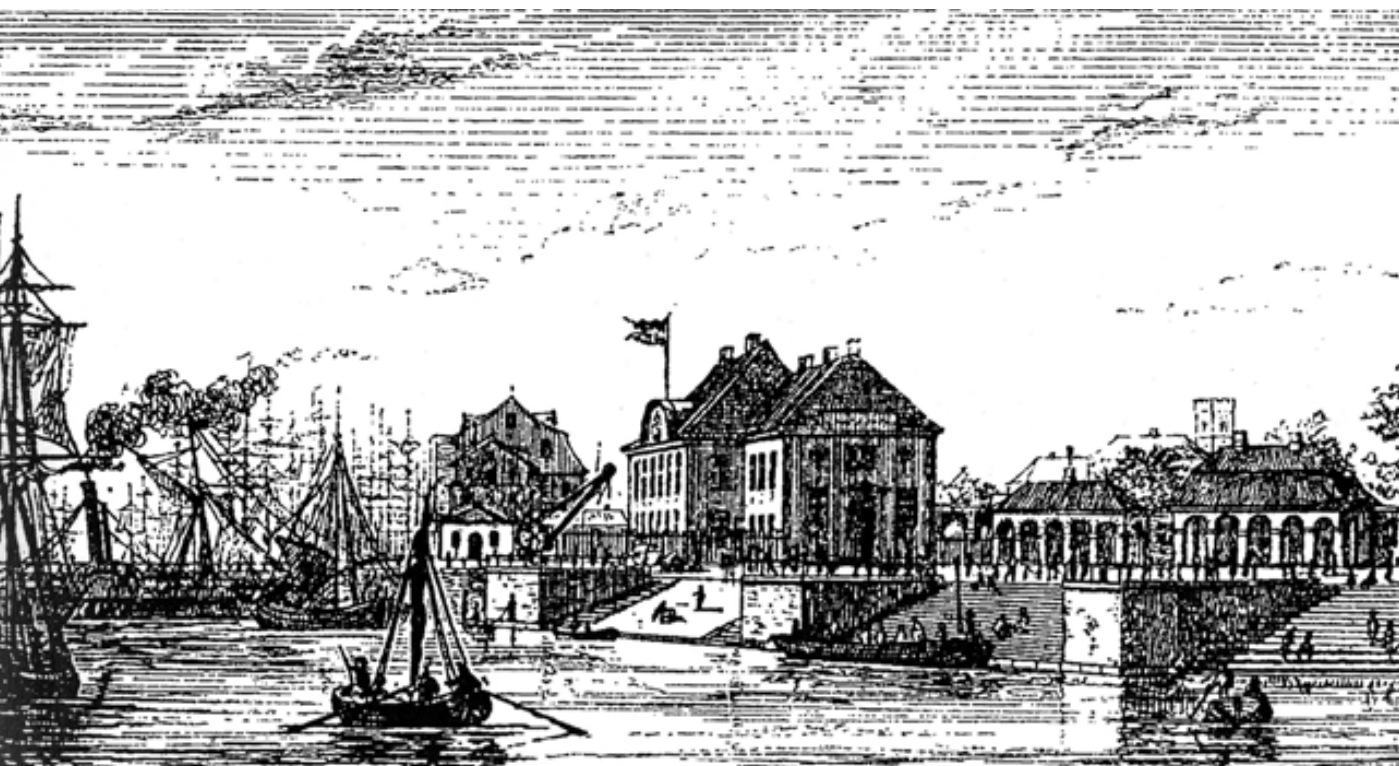
Rather than run with the herd, he decided to go his own, uncustomary way, devoting himself heart and soul to exercising the original Christian mode of life. In his efforts to make his own life concur with this aim, he took up the solitary life of a writer, refused to carry out his duties as a rural vicar, and even cancelled the approaching marriage with his fiancée. Then, as if foreseeing his allotted years, he composed a voluminous work in a very short time, dying at the age of forty two with no due recognition of that exceptional achievement. It came across otherwise in the local press however, where he was the object of satirical articles. And the children called after him on the streets.

Who does he address, that singular and contrarian thinker, all but hidden behind his numerous pseudonyms, giving his books bizarre titles, and

working feverishly on several books at once, besides writing a daily diary? He wrote for the individual reader, for you and me, though at the same time he does not make it easy for the reader – partly because it is never quite certain who said what and what is meant – but mostly because he is of the opinion that truth can only be communicated indirectly.

Not without reason was he called the precursor of postmodernism, who ‘deconstructed’ the great theories and ideologies one after the other. Yet right through all the explicit digressions and utterances of his many alter egos, there is one great call, a call addressing the individuals for whom he writes challenging us whether we can muster up the courage, as he did in his own life, to follow only our own inner compass. And although he alarms us and continually confronts us directly with ourselves, not once does he indoctrinate or point a finger. He never detracts from the heart of the matter with gross generalities, and the heart of the matter is always our own self. On the contrary, he directly challenges us to be who and what we are, in our own real concrete existence, without fantasising about ourselves, without deceiving ourselves with logical reasoning and beliefs which are alien to life, and without superficial observations of others – their behaviours, their ideals and their disappointments – which is no more than an attempt to escape the burden of our own life for the want of real life.

Kierkegaard does not do that. In his view, life can never be lived to its real fullness while



enclosed in the safe walls of pre-set, self-assured minds and belief structures; it needs the free life-atmosphere that courageously goes in a totally different direction than the superficial current. One who genuinely wants to be what they really are, can do so, when they really have the will. A fulfilling life, in all its disquieted uncertainty, must take place in the middle of a world brimming with contradictions and conflicts. This, however, does not mean indulging in the sensory life of what Kierkegaard terms 'the aesthetic human being', the person who clings to

the fleeting good and bad luck, the evaporating momentary pleasures and accompanying vexations that life-experience in this world has to offer. Indeed, Kierkegaard finds it necessary to lift oneself out of the immediacy of this world with free will. At the same time, he does not believe that a collective culture 'of ethical persons' is capable of freeing human beings as long as they cling to their moral and religious prescriptions. They can at most achieve an agreeable compromise with worldly mediocrity, whereby they can hardly placate their personal conscience.

Further, he reckons mercilessly with all intellectual reflections that set everything into logical concepts, all with inconsistent propositions, and with judgements about what is true, false, good or bad.

From his viewpoint, it is not possible to track down the objective truth by occupying oneself with detached earthly knowledge or historical facts, by which one will never be able to fulfil and make concrete their own unique vocation and destination. Having lived through all this himself, Kierkegaard knew these things well enough, so his skill in analysing and sketching all these diversities of life comes as no surprise. In his descriptions, all the blind alleys become highways from which he has returned, that he has considered closed for himself. As he saw it, it was due to the failure and powerlessness to live life completely, as it must be lived, that total despair and desperation strike unfailingly and irrevocably at the end of every life.

Thus he places us as individuals before the adventure of life's unique assignment. He shows us our own existential fear, a condition he calls 'objective uncertainty', the very precarious situation of having nowhere in this world where one can still find a measure of protection. At the same time in all his writings he implores us not to plunge too deeply amidst fear and uncertainty, for then we risk becoming even more locked up in ourselves, in the strong temptation to lose ourselves in dreams, to dwell in the past, to worry about the future.

All this, he says, cannot help us if we do not

Quoting Kierkegaard

Most people – particularly those who have suffered in one way or another since childhood and have a kind of cross to bear, a weighty restriction for their soul – start with the hope and with what people call belief, that things will get better, that God will put everything in order, and so on. Then, slowly but surely, when the change for the better does not come, they resort little by little to the comfort of an eternity, that is, they learn to resign themselves to, to draw strength from, the concept of the everlasting.

Those of a deeper nature, more by God inclined to the eternal, understand from the start that their present suffering must be borne for as long as they live, and that they cannot ask God for such an extraordinary and paradoxical form of help, even though, for them, nothing is more certain than God's perfect love. They resign thus, because the eternal is so close to them, and they discover a certain peace in this way, in the continuing and blissful certainty that God is love. The suffering however, they must accept. In the course of time, as they enter more and more the concrete reality of life, with the increasing awareness that they are a finite being; when time and its continuity exercises its power over them, and despite all their exertions it becomes extremely difficult year after year with only the notion of



Due to his emphasis on the concreteness and uniqueness of human existence, with an accent on personal freedom of choice, Kierkegaard is sometimes considered the father of existentialism which became widely known through figures like Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) and Albert Camus (1913-1960), but progressively took on a hue of atheism. People can find a certain degree of freedom in this by ridding themselves of all supervision by an authoritative God. Yet the stream of thinking such as that expressed by

the wholly un-bookish German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), considers human existence to be fully coherent with the essence, with the essential Being. The undercurrent of truth, he says, can surface through any kind of thinking, but comes to light and reveals itself effectively only in the concrete reality of life itself. As in the Greek word 'aletheia' it is then no longer hidden, literally: it stays no longer in the oblivion of the Lethe. One of his acknowledged pupils was the Jewish Hannah Arendt (1906-1975),

succeed now in giving expression to our own real self, because only in this way can we arrive at knowledge which is genuine living wisdom, a wisdom not trapped in slogans or learned from books. The condition is self-knowledge in which we see through all that is temporal and our own part in it; but also knowledge of the transcendent, in which our real self has its foundation, lifted above everything temporal, for it is the impenetrable absolute that brings the true self into being.

This confronts us with the paradox of our own existence, which he regards as the synthesis of time and eternity, the finite and the infinite. Only the deep awareness of this predicament can provide us with the necessary inner quality to manage – as he says – to live forwards: from despair to hope, from fear to trust, from closed to open – all qualities that the familiar world, the appearance of things, can never achieve. Neither science, nor social merit, nor the all-too-humane commitment of faith can do that.

Therefore Kierkegaard invites us to resolutely choose for ourselves, not in the finite sense but in the absolute sense, because – he states clearly – it is not your being who is void of spirit. Therefore it is necessary that each of us ventures the leap that nothing in this world can explain – the radical breakthrough from all the known, into the absolutely unknown, into the completely other, into the abyss of being, into what can neither be thought nor comprehended.

This is altogether the most inalienable insight that anyone can acquire, so it can never be the sum of all finite, temporary experiences. It is a summons that cannot be mitigated or reasoned away. Kierkegaard explicitly entreats that we no longer cling to the finite, for it always leads to a demonic exclusivity, as is the case with all ideological blinding of totalitarian systems that lock the unconditional in the conditional. His hope is that in all our temporal limitations – in all our thinking, feeling and doing, in all

known for her thought-provoking report of the Eichmann trial in Israel in the 1960's. Also Hans Jonas (1903-1993), who in his research on the spirit of the Alexandrian Gnostics, saw great similarities with existentialism when he read about humanity's fallen state. If we read Kierkegaard's work well, it makes a similar distinction between the aesthetic, ethical and religious, as do the Gnostics in speaking of the hylic (physical human being), psychic (natural soul human being) and pneumatic human being (spirit-soul-human being).

our comings and goings – we become aware of the eternal in us, the spirit in us. That is what he means by 'resignation': the renouncement of life itself, abandoning the temporal self. Paradoxically, to be true to oneself demands a task of oneself. But it does not end there, because there is always a double movement, a repetition, a return of that from which one has distanced oneself. Through the process of detaching, at the same time, other doors always open to the fullness of the spiritual life as a potential rebirth – not in the temporal world, which would be a modified version of the same old self – but a new birth in the spirit-soul-life. One can just become as an illusion of the autonomous self, but then one gives up all self-authority. In his view, rebirth does not mean trying to escape the finite in a boundless mystical and passive longing, because it is precisely in the midst of the finite that the infinite is able to realise itself. Only in the midst of change can man surrender in confidence to what is above all

the eternal for comfort; when in this way they grow more humble, or learn something of what it means to be truly human – though still too ideal or too abstract in their resignation, thus always leaving room for moments of despair – then, through the force of absurdity, the potential of true faith can arise in them, and they can fully trust that in their temporality, God will indeed help them. (Journal Entry)

This all indicates that most people never reach fullness of faith. They live a long time in the immediacy, concluding with a measure of reflection, and then they die. The exceptions to this start the other way round, they are deliberative since childhood; without immediacy they start with the dialectic, with the reflection, and thus they live, year after year, for about as long as the immediacy type. Then at a more mature



After Kierkegaard broke his engagement with Regine Olsen, he left her with the engagement ring he had given her, forged in the form of a cross: the transformation of his ordinary love to a form of higher spiritual love as an eternal commitment. Kierkegaard gave up his own happiness, since he considered himself incapable of being a good husband and did not want to make her unhappy. But Regine actually suffered more, not less.



change: the absolute life and true self-genesis, transparent and open for the life that transcends the finite.

Such a life does not ask one to stand inert and go with the flow, locked away in the fleeting moments, but to be truly present ‘in time’. Kierkegaard does not seek eternity far away but right here at the intersection where life happens; in the touch of eternity breaking into time. In every twinkle of the eye one can stand where stillness and motion coincide. Then one returns to the original state of innocence, in a second totally different immediacy that does not retreat from critical thinking – as with the aesthetic human being in whom the spirit still lies dormant – but which surpasses the thinking. The immediacy of a self that has obtained

spirit, one’s own spirit, the self of one who dares to give oneself unconditionally to the absolute life. That is the ultimate destination of a human being who voluntarily obeys and takes up the cross of their present concrete life. Thus in becoming equal to themselves they find peace along the way – not the peace of bourgeois self-complacency that Kierkegaard saw all around him, but the equilibrium that, by becoming absolutely nothing, demonstrates its essential greatness. ☸

age, the potential of faith presents itself to them, for faith can arise from the immediacy when it follows reflection. Obviously such ‘exceptions’ will most often experience difficult times during childhood and youth, because to be reflective in one’s innermost being at an age when one would by nature be in the immediacy can cause intense melancholy, but not without reward. Most people do not reach openness for the spirit; the many years spent living only for the moment erode any real spiritual discourse, thus the spirit does not reach fulfilment. But the troubled childhood and youth may flower into openness for the spirit. (Journal Entry)

Søren Kierkegaard

1813	Born 5 May in Copenhagen.		Constantin Constantius; <i>Philosophical Fragments</i>
1830-40	studied philosophy and theology.		by Johannes Climacus; <i>The Concept of Anxiety</i>
1838	death of his father by a contagious disease, from which, one after another, all siblings die except for himself and one brother.		by Vigilius Haufniensis; <i>Prefaces</i> by Nicolaus Notabene.
1840	engagement to Regine Olsen.	1846	appearance of <i>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</i>
1841	defence of his thesis ‘ <i>On the Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates</i> ’; inexplicable termination of his engagement; two years in Berlin attending the lectures of Friedrich von Schelling, a philosopher keen on the work of Jacob Boehme.		by Johannes Climacus, presently to be sharply besieged in a series of articles in Danish paper <i>The Corsair</i> .
		1849	appearance of <i>The Sickness Unto Death</i> by Anti-Climacus.
		1850	appearance of <i>Practice in Christianity</i> by Anti-Climacus.
1843-44	appearance of important books such as <i>Either/Or</i> by Victor Eremita; <i>Fear and Trembling</i> by Johannes de Silentio; <i>Repetition</i> by	1855	collapsed of exhaustion on the street in September; admitted to hospital, died in Copenhagen on 11 November.

building and breaking

Esotericism has come to play an important part in western culture for some time now. In this vein, for the purpose of self-realisation, it has become accepted to speak of transformation as a necessary conversion in our being; of a transmutation in the sense of an inner change, the building of a new consciousness-vehicle or consciousness-body. This inner alchemy consists of a purification and a cleansing of the microcosm which has become more and more enmeshed in a 'material' cage.

The most vivid images of transformation are probably the ones of breaking up and building up. In order to erect a new building, a new temple, it is necessary to do away with the old one. In an extreme western variant it may even be necessary to raze everything to the ground first, including nature and culture. But the Indian and Arabian religious systems also harbour the aspect of the Destroyer as one of the fiery workings of the divine spirit. In that aspect, things are annihilated completely.

The idea behind this is that a new beginning can only be made if all the old remnants are razed to their foundations. This process is currently and somewhat cryptically called 'creative destruction' which purports that at the same time that the old is destroyed, a rebuilding will take place that conforms to this re-creation. This re-creation makes use of the energies which are released by the destruction. This clean-up process is very advantageous for a new revolutionary conversion but it is of the essence to prepare for the rebuilding at the same time. If not, then the void space may fall prey to emptiness, just like water in a stagnant pool. The cleared space may then easily be the beginning of deterioration.

The purpose of breaking and building is a change of life through a dynamic and active effort.

Western humanity has been born and bred with this concept: the victory of the new – profit by all means – is our goal in life! In art

but especially in our economy this attitude is easily recognised: standing still means lagging behind – growth is king in our economy, as well as replacing the old with the new. The spirit of the time must be expressed! Also in our predominant religion, Christianity, it is all about victory, here not of the individual, the personality, the ego, but of the soul in the spirit of Christ. According to Paul this victory even swallows up the nature of death.

The recipe of breaking and building even seems to be a universal tendency for it holds true for many territories the world over. It predominates over other recipes for development no matter how strongly they are put forward. Take for example the economy of the 'enough' which we meet in 'sustainability', organic produce, and ecology. 'All good and well,' we will hear, 'it is of course very necessary that e.g. the loss of species is stopped but ultimately there must first be profit and gain! There is too much driving force in the western, indeed global society to build an economy-of-the-enough.'

And thus one can easily become addicted to building and to the idea that you have to build in order to grow, as we observe in the building of offices and factories. It is true indeed in every other economic activity as well as in psychological processes as well as in the development of our consciousness, where the 'consciousness industry' offers good profits. 'Oh! – I grow' was the title of a book that reflected this idea perfectly.



But if it is true that ‘what goes up must come down’ may this not also be true with this dominant idea that growth is necessary? Could it be that from this ‘Oh! – I grow’ we ultimately must expect a society in which contraction shall become predominant, as our present time seems to suggest?

PERVERTED GROWTH This can easily come to pass as the facts increasingly show us that healthy growth more and more changes into an unnatural forced, and indeed forcing, growth. When, in other words, civilisation ‘outgrows’ nature, we have perverted growth. Such a perverted culture is a sign of degeneration, not of an ultimate ascension. And the paradoxical question for those who have maintained their integrity is: can one, in a time of cultural disintegration, book a profit in the realm of consciousness?

Can the soul in this environment grow and have a perspective towards victory?

Can one still be comfortable with all this breaking-and-building after one has experienced that one cannot ascend via ‘matter-embracing’, as J. van Rijckenborgh so aptly put it – by grasping matter and becoming

attached to an ever-growing prosperity and more abundance?

History shows that often a cultural and spiritual flowering, in which the individual is stimulated to inner growth, runs parallel to economic growth and prosperity.

Great spiritual movements came into being precisely in times of economic prosperity.

But the time of economic success has passed the stage of building up and we have arrived, certainly in Europe, at a scenario of contraction with regard to demography, finance and culture.

The present decline of what was once a pioneer civilisation has passed that phase.

The decline is reflected in an avalanche of unmasking, disclosures, and stunning information through the unequivocal exposure of detestable, corrupt and evil happenings, which previously could stay hidden. This does not mean that they did not exist in earlier times, they just become visible faster and are more easily identifiable. Everyone with a bit of common sense must be aware of the result of all this, namely ruination, demolition, in short the exploitation-economy for profit maximisation.



A CHANCE FOR THE SOUL In all this we learn to recognise the illness of the mind which threatens world and humanity and invites, yes forces us, to join in, for you have to earn your money somehow, don't you? And the question arises, are there any small coins left for the soul that has 'looked the Medusa in the face'? Or is this soul indeed doomed to die? There is certainly a chance for the soul that has seen through this evil genius – maybe not a great chance for as human beings we have our limitations in what we can endure, and this equilibrium of the soul is considerably threatened.

Yet because of this transparency and the disappearance of borders worldwide, the soul is given an opportunity to unite with other righteous people and so form a spiritual unity just because of the falling away of the dividing lines. This unity does not stand upon itself but has love and compassion as its glue. Further demolition and forced breaking-up are no longer necessary, are harmful even.

With this insight the soul may build in a spiritual sense, subtly, that is to say with the aid of ether values which have been freed by love. The breaking-up is then a conscious letting

go of that which is no longer necessary but would be hindering, because it would erect a dam, as it were, in the eternal stream that purports to flow into the microcosm.

As one female mystic once testified: 'As the water flows, so flows the living light.' And with and in this stream the soul not only unites with all the righteous people that can in this sense be called brothers and sisters, but also with the Source – the Source that is the inner god and the inner sun.

Then there is no need for this union to be broken up again for the inner building is truly erected. This liberated state of being brings direct responsibility for the (immortal) soul that can now clearly define what is beneficial and what is harmful. Thus the inner building is safe. The Rosicrucians have built their home in this way for centuries. It is a spiritual sphere, that stands as a house. We who live in it keep it clean by not neglecting the inner and outer cleansing processes. Thus, if this cleaning process is kept up, there is no need for breaking up any more.

The Light will continue to shine forth. The unity with the Light will be kept intact. ✨

enlightenment as source for engagement



The death of UN-chief Dag Hammarskjöld remains cloaked in mystery 52 years later. His posthumously published diary has become a spiritual source of inspiration for many. During the night of September 17-18, 1961, a small airplane crashed in North-Rhodesia (now Zambia) close to the airport of Ndola. Generally speaking this event would not have received international attention, but this was not just any small plane. For almost completely in the back, close to the tail fin, sat Dag Hammarskjöld, then the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

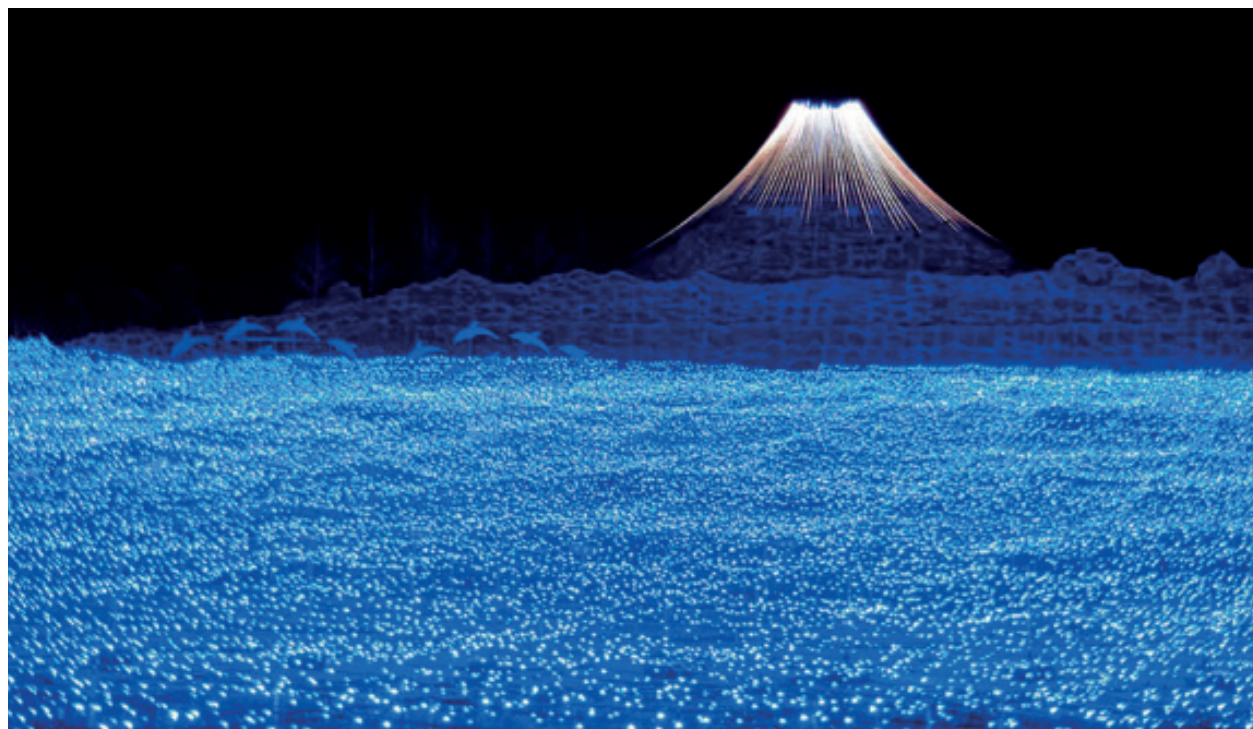
Jeroen van der Zeeuw*

THE DARK NIGHT OF A DIPLOMAT

His death was a shock for the world community. Hammarskjöld, a Swede, was admired by friend and foe alike for his decisive way of acting as peacemaker in various hotspots during the Cold War. Not yet entirely recovered from the shock of his death, some of Hammarskjöld's friends and co-workers began emptying his apartment on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. They made a surprising discovery. In his nightstand they found a small folder with loose but neatly ordered sheets of paper. On the small folder was a short letter addressed to a friend. It was as if Hammarskjöld had counted on the papers being found by others. It turned out to be a very personal document, a kind of diary, but not a diary with notes about Hammarskjöld's many meetings with the powerful leaders of the world. The often short notes contain chiefly deep philosophical and theological contemplations that give the reader insight into Hammarskjöld's soul. He himself called them 'my negotiations with myself – and with God'. For the title Hammarskjöld decided on *Markings*. These are small stone-men built by travelers in inhospitable regions in order to be able to find the path again. For Hammarskjöld the diary notes are such markings of the often desolate inner path that he travelled during his lifetime.

The diary was published in 1963 and appeared in Dutch in 1965. When Ruud Lubbers took office as Prime Minister of The Netherlands in 1982, Queen Beatrix presented him with a copy of *Markings*. The Dag Hammarskjöld pilgrimage, composed of six day trips, has been located in the far north of Sweden since 2004. Each day a hiker encounters places of meditation where texts from *Markings* can be considered.

IRRITATION The publication of Hammarskjöld's diary caused surprise, but also irritation. Although Hammarskjöld sometimes came across as somewhat reserved, almost shy, his friends and co-workers knew him as a warm-hearted person with enormous depth. Hammarskjöld loved literature, poetry, visual arts, philosophy and nature and cherished the mountainous scenery of Lapland. However even his closest friends and co-workers were surprised that he turned out to have such a deep spirituality. But for others *Markings* led to irritation, certainly in secular Sweden. Some journalists ridiculed him. They didn't seem to be able to get over the fact that someone of the caliber of Hammarskjöld turned out to be such a deeply spiritual person. His success and fame must have gotten to his head, they suggested. But in reading *Markings*, one does not encounter a spir-



For all that has been:

Thank You.

For all that is to come:

Yes!

Dag Hammarskjöld

The moment when Hammarskjöld said 'yes' to 'something or someone' was a key moment – after which he gave himself with full conviction to his work as UN chief. He had a deep spiritual experience of liberation and enlightenment, but that resulted in an even greater and more convinced engagement in worldly matters. The material and stubborn world mattered even more to Hammarskjöld precisely because of his enlightenment. That is the way: the inner kingdom as upper room, a safe place in the heart; the consciousness directed toward the Light. Thus the enlightened human being is active in 'the world', in the community. Without diminishing his own inner path, which he lays aside in and through service to others.

itual fanatic who has lost sight of reality. On the contrary, Hammarskjöld knows as no other how to bring together mystical and social engagement. That is what is so appealing to many in his spirituality, from its first publication to the present day. If there is one entry in *Markings* that expresses Hammarskjöld's spirituality, it is this one: 'In our era, the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action.' Here Hammarskjöld's spirituality makes us think of that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor and resistance fighter who was shot by a Nazi firing-squad in 1945. Bonhoeffer and Hammarskjöld were both born in 1905 and grew up in a world that was increasingly secular and even anti-religious. Both came to the conviction that in such a society spirituality certainly may not mean that one resigns from the world. Their spirituality directed itself completely to the here and now. It is not always easy to combine spirituality with your daily experiences and responsibilities. Yet Hammarskjöld struggled all his life to bring these into harmony. *Markings* shows clearly that for decades Hammarskjöld suffered from experiences of futility and depression, even while his life was extraordinarily successful in the eyes of others. Already at a young age he became a top public servant in the Ministry of Finance and at the Swedish national bank, ultimately becoming a government minister. But notes in *Markings* show that he often suffered from feelings of emptiness and futility. It appears that in 1952 Hammarskjöld reached rock bottom. He went through a deep existential crisis, 'a dark night'. But that year is also a turning point with regard to his frame of mind, as appears in *Markings*. Exactly at the moment that Hammarskjöld was at the deepest point, the light suddenly broke through. His first entry in the diary in 1953: "For all that has been: thank you. For all that is to come: yes!" What caused this change is not easy to point out. Ham-

marksjöld does not give any clarification about this. But in the years after 1952 he refers time and again to the moment when he said 'yes'. In 1961, a few months before his death, he wrote the following: 'I do not know who –or what – posed the question. I do not know when it was posed. I do not remember that I answered. But at some point I said yes to someone – or something. Since that moment I have the certainty that life is meaningful and that my life, in surrender, has a purpose. From that moment I have known the meaning of 'not looking back', 'not worrying about the day of tomorrow'. Hammarskjöld's 'yes' is a complete acceptance of and surrender to God, himself and his fate. It is not a sudden conversion, he says. The 'yes' has in a way been slowly growing underground. But when it rather suddenly breaks through sometime in 1952, it is an enormous liberation.

REBORN This experience of liberation nearly coincides with Hammarskjöld's appointment as Secretary-General of the United Nations in 1953. He surprised both friend and foe with his energetic, courageous and visionary performance. Undoubtedly this has to do with the fact that Hammarskjöld felt himself to be reborn on the spiritual plane.



Hammarskjöld during a meeting about the crisis in the Congo, early 1960



The secretary-general inspects the UN-peace troops in Abu Suwayr (Egypt) at the end of the Suez-crisis (1956). The idea of unarmed troops that promote world peace came from Dag Hammarskjöld

In spite of this he did not have an easy time as Secretary-General. He regularly appeared as mediator in crisis situations. And because he especially supported the weak countries in the UN, he repeatedly collided with the powerful ones. In 1961 Dag Hammarskjöld posthumously received the Nobel Prize for Peace.

Sometimes it seems that he sensed an unnatural and early death approaching. In this regard he identified his life path with that of Jesus of Nazareth, as this entry shows: 'Everyone who has accepted his fate knows that the path of vocation ends on the cross – even though it leads him through acclamation round Gennesaret or through the triumphal arch into Jerusalem.' But he wasn't afraid of it. The 'yes' had freed him from his darkest night. Death no longer had a hold over him. In complete surrender to humanity and God, death was to him no more and no less than 'the border to the unheard'.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS The plane carrying Dag Hammarskjöld and fifteen fellow passengers crashed on September 18, 1961 shortly past midnight. The circumstances surrounding his death are still mysterious. Many questions have never been properly answered. Why was the wreck only found officially after fifteen hours, when the plane crashed not far from the airport? Why did the only survivor of the

crash (who later still died) claim that the plane exploded before it hit the ground? Why did the authorities show no interest in eyewitness accounts or rumors about a second aircraft that flew very close to the UN-plane just before the crash? And why did some people say that there was a gunshot wound in Hammarskjöld's head, but it was not visible in the photos? There were various investigations exploring the death of Hammarskjöld in the 1960's. However they did not solve the mystery. In recent years much new information has surfaced. On this basis a commission has examined whether the investigation into Hammarskjöld's death should be re-opened. Last week the report was presented in the Peace Palace in The Hague. The most important conclusion: most likely American intelligence services made recordings of the radio traffic on that particular night in 1961. The commission has requested the NSA (National Security Agency) to make these public. Up to now there has been no response. 🌟

**The author read Markings some years ago. The impact was great. He experienced Hammarskjöld's reflections as his struggles with himself, with God and with the experience of futility as extremely profound – and Hammarskjöld's 'yes' as extraordinarily inspiring.*

This article appeared in the Dutch daily newspaper *Trouw* on September 17, 2013.