



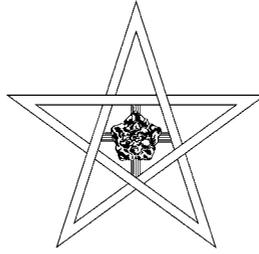
pentagram

Lectorium Rosicrucianum



The reality of the Light
About what we cannot speak
Hilma af Klint
Pekka Ervast
About the essence of art
Marcus Aurelius,
emperor-philosopher from Rome

2014 | NUMBER 1



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The periodical **pentagram** intends to draw the readers' attention to a new era in the development of humanity.

In all times, the pentagram symbolises the reborn human being, the new man. The pentagram also symbolises the universe and its eternal genesis, through which the divine plan is manifested.

A symbol receives its current value when it drives to realisation. The human being who realises the pentagram in his microcosm, his small world, has entered the path of transfiguration. The periodical **pentagram** invites the reader to enter this new era by accomplishing an inner, spiritual revolution.

pentagram

volume 36 2014 number 1

In the context of the Rosycross, art is above all alchemy. It is an art form that requires the highest level of ability: pure philosophy, spiritual experience and a sincere art of living, all in one. Alchemy is a symbolic art that requires of the artist nothing else than the elements that he assembles in his or her interior world. His knowledge comes from the two worlds in which his life plays out. One of them is known; the other, he does not yet see, but he senses it as a new sphere of life. As to the necessary fire, its fuel is furnished through his ardent longing, his aspiration to the spirit.

In this issue of the **pentagram**, readers can deepen their understanding of the connection of art, science and religion, as they are understood within the Rosycross. Next is found a cross-section through the work of Hilma af Klint, a spiritual pioneer from a hundred years ago who was inspired by the world of abstraction and by the teachings of theosophy and the spiritual powers that swirled around them, becoming the first to fully understand them.



Cover: Dawn Rising. One of the oldest images of Hermes, who raises the dawn out of the *Vas hermeticum* (the Hermetic vase). Berlin, ca. 1510

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the reality of the light ...

What is the role of a museum, now that over the whole world one can see everything, instantaneously, on their laptop, iPad or tablet? What should we do with this reality? What can compensate for the beautiful songs of a singer/songwriter such as Leonard Cohen, or the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra? For instance, what do the sounds of a simple cello, played by an ordinary amateur, still mean compared to the refined and artistic sounds, perfectly registered and produced, from the music industry?

Consider the established order. Everywhere from government to the arts, we can see a high society, the insiders, the elite. Just as in governing circles the agreeable jobs go to the powerful, so it is in the arts. The same modern and avant-garde artworks are always shoved forward into the spotlight, and now the discussion comes to its point: we can also observe the same pattern with the Light.

Many groups, organisations, congregations, and societies have taken the Light as their possession. Some people see this as an exploitation of the Light and for this reason do not even want to consider what the Light could truly be. There are other people that only listen or talk about the Light and fail to make it into their own inner truth. Many search for it and worldwide much is said about the Light. But the true Light cannot be expressed in words. Therefore trying to read about it would also not bring the true Light forward.

But one could probably try to sing about it. Leonard Cohen attempted to do so in one of his songs, *Going home*, where he tells us about the Light. He states that he did not find the Light but that the Light found him. The basic attitude that speaks from this song is that the Light is friendly and full of love. The Light says, 'O, I do like Leonard! He is a gallant fellow and also somewhat like a shepherd. Okay, he's lazy and subversively funny, but he does what I ask even though he doesn't want to. He's a good fellow.'



...and a song of **leonard cohen**



Today people look for art that speaks to them and touches their lives. And why shouldn't they?

At the same time we hear in this song about the seventy years of his life, in which he spent ten years in a Zen monastery on Mount Baldy in northern California. Cohen said in an interview: 'I find that we live in miserable times. Not literature, not music can really put the finger on the pulse of this crisis. As I see it, we are floating in a flood, a flood of Biblical proportions.

This flood is unfolding around us and also within us – at this moment it creates damage mostly within us, but it already leaks through to our daily reality. This flood has such gigantic and Biblical proportions, that I see how everyone in their own way is gripping whatever orange crate or piece of wood to stay afloat. We float past each other in this swirling river, which washes away nearly all our reference points and wipes out most of what we possess inwardly. And even under these circumstances people are emphasising that they are 'progressive' or 'conservative'. According to me they are completely sick.'

We see the same in the world of art, of museums. Today people look for art that speaks to them and touches their lives. And why shouldn't they? Anna Tilroe wrote recently in the weekly magazine *De Groene Amsterdammer* that museum curators are often at a lost with

respect to this new trend. If museums want to have more impact in society today, they have to abandon their traditional cultural-historical guidelines. The idea of 'autonomous art' must be adapted.

The idea that Art is indisputable in itself gives insiders an absolute power. But in today's individualised society, absolute power is viewed with great skepticism.

Perhaps the approach of composer Merlijn Twaalfhoven could provide an answer to that quandary. He sees himself not so much as a composer but more as an inventor of sound events that make lives a bit more real. For example he composed a concert for Cyprus where Turkish and Greek musicians each played on their own side of the dividing wall. Now Twaalfhoven has also gone to Jerusalem to organise concerts in Palestinian houses to help them forget their ideological differences for a short time. He says, 'If you want to touch people in the heart, then you have to connect with them and take risks.'

Isn't it all about dealing with this? Every aspect in society is highly individualised and common sense is becoming harder to find. The oil industry, the financial world, social institutions and environmental groups are only a few examples. Even groups that aim for eter-

nity, for inner growth and enlightenment, see only their own small part and not the bigger picture. All these conferences, congresses and the United Nations try in their own way to improve the overall situation, although for the most part everyone is only busy building their own Tower of Babel so as not to be beaten. The same can be observed in all kinds of groups that intend to demonstrate the Light. Are their intentions not good? But in reality how helpful are meditations, celebrations, and sermons about the light? In an interview Leonard Cohen said that the sin of pride manifests itself by us assuming that we are a kind of elite crusader of the spiritual world, more courageous, heroic and undaunted than the average person. In his song *Going Home* Cohen described how he learned to let the light speak: 'But he does what I tell him, even though it isn't welcome; he just doesn't have the freedom to refuse. He will speak these words of wisdom like a sage, a man of vision, though he knows he's really nothing but the brief elaboration of a tube.'

Leonard is going home, at least he sings about it – without a burden on his shoulders, without all his karma, for no reason, maybe tomorrow, going somewhere where it is better than before. Yes, he would still like to write

a song about love, or forgiveness, or what to do when everything seems to fail; about a cry that drowns all suffering, or a sacrifice that heals everything. But the Light does not need him for that. The Light wants to liberate him, make him realise that there are no burdens and that he does not need to understand everything. He should do solely what the light tells him and pass it on to others.

The crucial moment is when the ego gives up its pride and the importance of its own ideas and, in simplicity, does just what is necessary in service to our neighbours. Everyone can understand that. It is not difficult. But there are many levels to it.

Does it sound too simple? What then is the purpose of our creation? Is it only to be, to exist, to hear that we don't have to become or be anything to be able to find the Light? We are seeking. We seek for the Unity, the Oneness of the All-Creator.

We long to be completely united, in the now, in a living energy. And we realise that no difference can exist between us and the Oneness of the All-Creator. This insight allows us to deeply understand that we cannot live without the life of the All-Creator streaming through us. When we realise that nothing

divides us from the Oneness, then our view of the world will completely change. And it is very special that all of a sudden we know each other. We know, as we are known. All narrow-mindedness falls away, not because we have become such great persons but because we know that we all share something with the Oneness of the All-Creator. The All-Creator is everything in everything, it is the one and only Totality.

This experience is a very startling and fundamental one. You cannot be 'a little bit' conscious. We understand that all life-fields form a unity – all life-fields, all continents, the earth, all planetary systems, the universe, all form a unity. Now we are able to see even the most distant cosmos as part of this unity. Conscious of this unity, we become fully confident, as family, as respiration field.

This unity reaches from the most distant past into the furthest barely imaginable future. Then we will understand from deep within that all of life is One. The fundamental insight will stand clearly before us that all of life serves only to realise the Unity with and from the All-Creator. By serving others, the awareness of this unity grows, just as the earth serves us by giving us everything we need, or the sun by radiating its immeasurable glory, warmth and beauty. Every flower, every smile is a witness to it.

Another insight becomes clear to us. While it is elevating to experience that all life is a unity, is One, still deep within me I am surely

not One – not only within my inner being, but also with all others. My 'I' is exactly the opposite to others and the Oneness. Look at the rays of the sun glittering on the water, warming the surface and evaporating minute amounts of water. Sun and water are opposite, yet both are subservient to something greater. Unity embraces opposites. We and the All-Creator are one, meaning that we are also the creators of our fate, our path of experiences. A veil was lowered over our consciousness whereby we forgot the knowledge of the all-encompassing consciousness and the All-unity. In exchange we received the inner knowledge that the All-unity exists. We received vigour, vitality, emotions, happiness and unhappiness, sweat and tears, but also unimaginable fulfilment. We evolved. We received a wonderful body. We also learned that a body can cause unthinkable pain and suffering.

We are standing in the greatest miracle that exists: matter that becomes en-souled. Yes, we are the miracle. We are not only matter, not only a wretched creature, for we have the possibility to be the new creation, the miracle. In this miracle the creator can get to know himself, when we get to know ourselves. Now we can see that an even greater miracle underlies this miracle. The veil that for a certain time shielded us from the knowledge of the all-encompassing consciousness acts as a great mercy. The ego-centric will can now voluntarily give up its 'own' interests and enter into the all-encompassing consciousness,

working willingly with it. This is the essence of creation. Nothing forces creation into being. It is free will. What lay in the beginning of creation was given to us by the All-Loving One: free will to love or to hate. We can now reflect on this in friendship and inner harmony. The One, the All-One, shines over all of us with its love and life.

In an Egyptian temple devoted to Isis in Philae is a depiction of Isis as she pours innumerable Ankh-signs over the candidate, the young king. The king – we could also call him the soul, the soul-king – stands in the reality of the light, in the stream of divine water as in an overflowing joy. We view this scene not with Egyptian archeological knowledge but with intuition and a faint inner longing. It leaves us in deep awe; we sense the great sublimity and the divine mystery that radiates through it.

From our current perspective we can see that we must have missed a crucial turning point in our search for consciousness in the sense that we no longer have the freedom to decide in which world we would like to be born. Additionally the 'rules of the game' are constantly changing, no one knows them anymore. So with all these different attempts to find the true way, we have manoeuvred ourselves into a dead-end street. We arrive at the threshold to a new dimension. Now we start to understand that we must learn to follow the 'rules' of our heart. When we risk everything and lay everything on the table, then our fellow play-

Going Home / Leonard Cohen

I love to speak with Leonard
He's a sportsman and a shepherd
He's a lazy bastard
Living in a suit

But he does say what I tell him
Even though it isn't welcome
He just doesn't have the freedom
To refuse

He will speak these words of wisdom
Like a sage, a man of vision
Though he knows he's really nothing
But the brief elaboration of a tube

Going home
Without my sorrow
Going home
Sometime tomorrow
Going home
To where it's better
Than before

Going home
Without my burden
Going home
Behind the curtain
Going home
Without the costume
That I wore

He wants to write a love song
An anthem of forgiving
A manual for living with defeat

A cry above the suffering
A sacrifice recovering
But that isn't what I need him
To complete

I want him to be certain
That he doesn't have a burden
That he doesn't need a vision
That he only has permission
To do my instant bidding
Which is to say what I have told him
To repeat

Let us cast off all theoretical knowledge, the theory that so often prevents us from seeing with our heart, which through respect for knowledge so often was ignored

ers are truly our 'fellows', our brothers and sisters. However they play, we surround them with love and friendship, with affection. Taking a close look at our life, we understand that we have to completely turn around, just as Hermes Trismegistus teaches us. Yes, we can do that. You find the Light not far away in an unreachable immovable kingdom, but right here, very close to us, within us. True pupils of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum are thus recognised. They stand right in this world, connected to everyone, and work quietly with the powers of a **new** dimension. They are characterised by clarity, aspiration, moral purity, devotion and friendship. Let us cast off all theoretical knowledge, the theory that so often prevents us from seeing with our heart, which through respect for knowledge so often was ignored. Let us also free ourselves of the concept of initiation. Everyone can become initiated through what now takes place. Just follow the path!

When we are told 'it' is in the temple, we have to watch out for then the seven candles of the candelabrum would be closer to 'Him'. Jesus said, 'If it is in the sky, then the birds of the sky will precede you, and if it is in the sea, then the fishes.' Or if it is in the Devachan or in the highest Heat-sphere, then the angels or

seraphim will precede you. Light and chaos cannot go together, nor Light and the murky waters of selfishness, nor Light and the sinister thoughts of a dark heart. But when we are told 'Arise!' then the time has come to listen. And when we are told 'Let go of your past!' then let us listen with all the intelligence of our being. And when it sounds 'Recognise the Light' then let us open up and surrender our hearts to this call. That is all we have to do. Then the question arises: don't we first have to overcome our negative, ego-driven thoughts, our emotional confusion, our desires? But who would be able to do so without having to shut off half of his being? Or as the holy language expresses it, 'Who would be justified?' If we long for the clarity, the help and the reality of the Light, we must embrace it. 'Now direct your heart upon the Light and know it' says Hermes Trismegistus. Everything becomes clear in the Light. Murky waters turn into crystal-clear brooks when sparkling light and oxygen can do their work.

The great miracle of eternity is here, in the human being. It flows through us and around us. This is the greatest miracle we have ever seen. Do not remain with the perishable, rather see in a new way. Do not look for the

persons whom we know with their thinking, temperament and blood, rather see them anew. See them in a way we have not yet known them.

John says: '...but among you stands one whom you do not know.'

In the Gospel of the Holy Twelve we can read: if thou hast seen thy brother and felt his love, thou hast seen the Father, if thou hast seen thy sister and felt her love thou hast seen the Mother. Far and near, the All Holy knoweth Their own, yea, in each of you, the Fatherhood and the Motherhood may be seen, for the Father and the Mother are One in God.'

Let us turn around. We are not trying to reach for heaven, for it is far removed and unrealistic, but we long for its Light. It is like a great treasure and an inner guide. It is faith in the sacred power of Love.

Try to understand this thought, this is the **new** thinking! Does the Bible not say, 'Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you?' It is here we are needed. Our heaven is here. Would the All-One withhold its magnificent radiance from only one small particle of its creation? He grants it to all and everything. Don't be narrow-minded, but think radiantly and gen-

erously, as He does, and things will be different. He brings us together and is present in his seven-fold radiant glory. He brings us together so that we can behold him in the best, quickest and correct way.

Jan van Rijckenborgh expressed it as follows. 'Why does the human life-wave hold such a special position in the universe? It is our material body that differentiates us from angels and archangels. This body is the most sacred that exists, even though it is so perishable. We are not looking for an initiation outside of our bodies, but within it. We seek within the body, and with a fully conscious body, the higher consciousness, the community of the free and immortal life. We do not divide the perishable from the imperishable, we bind them to the innermost. [...] For the perishable is called upon to make the imperishable, and the mortal the eternal. Initiation into the most profoundly human, the essentially human, the material revelation.

In this newly conceived land we hurry along. We win the new Kingdom with force, to offer the result of our achievement to our brothers and sisters.' ❀

whereof one cannot speak

‘The eternal reality of the static Kingdom cannot be described. Nothing in the world of dialectics can be compared with it: no form, no sound, no colour, no feeling and no thought. The eternal truth can therefore never be uttered perfectly. It cannot be communicated from mouth to ear. And no pen can describe it. This is impossible, even for the highest initiate.’¹

If one thinks about this, a truth-seeker faces some pressing questions: is one doomed to remain silent about the eternal truth; or should one, even though shakily, keep trying to speak about it? In other words, is it better to be silent or to speak about what touches us deeply?

Speaking and being quiet maintain a complex and paradoxical relationship. In a significant silence we often agree with each other, or so it seems, but as soon as words enter in, we do not understand each other anymore. One paradox is that both secular and sacred language are filled with odes to silence and stillness.

In libraries of every tradition, numerous texts praise the silence, while with the same verbiage they say how useless words can be. Both the old and the current culture remain rich with words, sometimes profane, sometimes sacred, yet still only words, as if without them we would be less, or not exist.

Anyway people can, once they are recovering from their encounter with the Light, no longer escape expressing themselves in words. Words of trepidation, groping and searching move about the mystery in wide circles. Or big ecstatic words, as if drawn directly from the deity. Anyway truth-seekers cannot but speak and write.

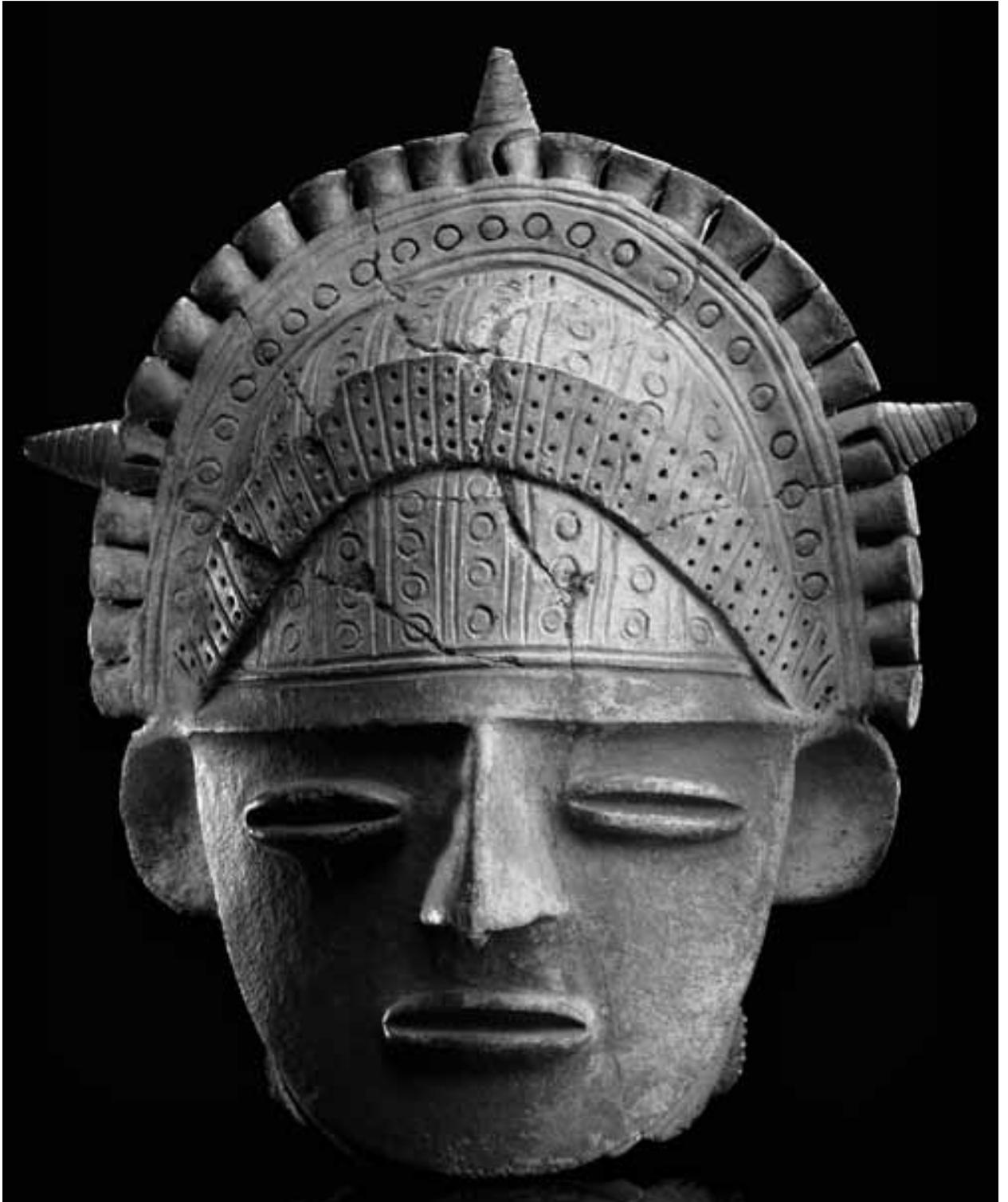
‘The messenger must try to give to the world the whole ocean in a single bottle,’ says Inayat Khan, pointing out the impossibility of this task.² Just as the church father Augustine had the lesson spelled out to him by a child who

admonished him that it is easier to empty the sea into a hole on the beach with a teaspoon than to describe properties of the deity in words. In any case, everyone who attempts to dare to speak about the truth runs up against a border: words fail, you bite your teeth on the language, names are inadequate. In other words, the more words, the less they appear to say anything.

Do we beat in vain with our words at the gate of the unspeakable? Do our existential questions ever receive an answer? Is there, metaphorically speaking, still room for the Other ‘in the inn of language’? Or is sacred language so infused with the essential that we continue to taste ‘It’ in it anyway, if necessary in the blank spaces between the lines? How should we otherwise understand ‘the lost word that rises behind the method, behind the sacred language, behind the philosophical awareness’?³ The point is not to be wilfully blind, unable to read and understand: ‘Read it, it is not what it says’⁴ – or is there a lot more than it says? What is needed before words can be keys, contradicting that talk about what really is, always remaining thin and vain, as already stated in Ecclesiastes?

We are helped by a writer, by Emily Dickinson, who stated with great sobriety: ‘I found

This Musica-Indian head of a senior warrior from Colombia was part of an approximately one-meter high figure from about 1200-1600 AD. Painted pottery, now in the National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.





Ancestral pueblo beakers, National Museum of the American Indian

Without ever getting to the end of what we want to say ... the seeking man cannot remain silent

we already know it and we've just forgotten it? The forgotten word, which according to J. van Rijckenborgh is a state of Being? Should we simply just remember that language? Our true mother tongue, the language as spoken in the Father's house? Time and time again Meister Eckhart continued to write long pages because he wanted to remain silent about God. And Lao Tzu devoted eighty one verses to a Tao that he already declared indescribable in verse one. And Rilke wrote the poetry: Ich glaube an Alles noch nie Gesagte – I believe in everything that has never been said. In apparent contradiction humanity of all times and places has fully deployed its language in approaching and naming the holy, fearlessly and tirelessly chasing her deepest desire. In search of the true Word of God, which admittedly is nearer than hands and feet but still not of this world, as opposed to knowing better than to speak out.

Although the line between dead language and living language is thin, and we might lose and at the same time destroy that to which we want to give word, we cannot – against the advice of the philosopher Wittgenstein – re-

the words to every thought I ever had but One.' Did she know the single thought that her language has no words for, but where she somewhere inwardly knew, as it were, before-words? But a thought without words, is that actually possible, to think without language? And can we, on the other hand, let the spirit speak in the dead letter? Not literally, but as intuitive suggestion of a divine perception, experience, memory? Is it still possible to tread in the language and transcend the language? Is there a new, original, silent and wordless language for the unspeakable? A language that sounds before and behind, above and below, between and beyond the language? And how can we learn to speak that language? Or do

main silent whereof one cannot speak. Without ever getting to the end of what we want to say ... the seeking person cannot remain silent. The human being is a signifier who casts the ineffable in language just like the invisible, white Light is split into a prism in visible colours. If it is good, his words are bridges or stepping stones on which people can temporarily be connected to eternity without sinking or drowning. Otherwise we walk silently, without words or signpost or compass, lost on the spiritual path? It is always on the cutting edge: talking on the edge of silence, and vice versa. And of course, it remains only a bridge, stepping stone, compass or signpost.

Ultimately, we have to throw away the ladder of words with which we made our way upstairs, as if we returned to before the creation where no words and no names can be found. Words and colours dissolve and join together again into the invisible white light.

‘The eternal truth can ... never be uttered perfectly. It cannot be communicated from mouth to ear. And no pen can describe it. This is impossible, even for the highest initiate.’ There is only one possibility, namely that one finds the answer to our oppressive existence and compelling questions in the sanctuary of the heart, in the innermost depths of the divine touch, when the delusion of the I is dead.’⁵ After all our vain and fruitless attempts to say ‘It’, we know gradually or suddenly that we should remain silent in order to clear the way so that His will can speak. And there, in and through

and beyond the expropriated I, God’s word speaks in all languages: of silence, of emptiness and fullness, of action and inaction. There the fallen-out-of-One flows again-in-One. And it shines all by itself. Because it cannot do otherwise. It is never silent. ☸

Picture

Courtesy of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C. From the book *Infinity of Nations: Art and History in the Collections of the National Museum of the American Indian*.

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hilma af klint

Starting in 1907, four years before there was even a question of abstract art, a modest Swedish artist painted a series named 'Paintings from the Temple'. 193 canvases with all the qualities of abstract art from the first decade of the twentieth century demonstrate an absolute artistic maturity, totally unknown until now.



Hilma af Klint (1862-1944) considered that the moment had not come for her visionary art, founded in a spiritual dimension, to be understood. More than a century ago, she painted many iconic images but did not exhibit them. In her will she wrote that her abstract art could only be presented to the public twenty years after her death. Indeed it needed more than twenty years, until the mid-eighties, for her work to be exposed for the first time. The breakthrough was made in 1986 during an exhibition in Los Angeles which presented a selection of her fascinating work. Hilma af Klint had already developed a unique and dynamic abstract idiom before the well-known protagonists of modernity, such as Kazimir Malevich, Kandinsky and Piet Mondriaan, set the tone for abstract art. Today she is considered one of the pioneers of abstract art. Who was Hilma? She was an artist born and raised with a clear vision, completely absorbed in her art. She grew up in a privileged environment and was encouraged greatly by her parents, who discovered her particular talent very early. She studied at the artistic technical School (Tekniska Skolan, currently Konstfack) of Stockholm as well as at the Royal Academy of Arts. Following her studies, she had a small personal studio in Stockholm where she earned her living as a portrait painter and landscape artist. A naturalistic painter, she worked discreetly because the male-dominated artistic environment of that period was not conducive to the

advancement of an artist as modest as Hilma. Besides she had a completely different internal life which she translated into a unique visual language, but she did not reveal the results of that to the world.

Why did she want to keep her paintings secret? What was her purpose?

Interest in the unseen was big at that time. We can notice it in the light of a number of scientific discoveries such as the X-ray and the electromagnetic spectrum. Spiritualist sessions were also popular, maybe because of the fact that much of what had previously been invisible could then be established scientifically. When she was thirty four years old, Hilma af Klint established a group named 'The Circle of Five' with four other women. They held meetings regularly during which they clearly underwent some spiritual experiences. They described these experiences and also recorded them in drawings. During that time Hilma began an internal journey in a world that she kept secret for years. She had an esoteric vision of life and dedicated herself to theosophy, always wanting to move forward. In Dornach, she made contact with the anthroposophical thought of Rudolf Steiner and studied the teachings of the Rosycross with dedication. Rudolf Steiner said about her that humanity would need about fifty years in order to understand her art. Hilma af Klint perceived that she was connected with an energy or spiritual influence from a totally different dimension. Unity of all things and the interdependence

after a hundred years,
the world is ready for her art



Hilma af Klint, Untitled. On the vision of flowers and trees, 1922



paintings were painted straightaway, without making sketches beforehand, and with great power. I had no idea of what the paintings would represent yet nevertheless I worked quickly and surely without changing even a brushstroke.'

In this series she envisioned the various steps of development of matter, called W, transforming into the spiritual, U. One of the steps in the development of this metamorphosis is the fusion of male and female principles: yellow and blue. The dimensions of these paintings are huge, and while building an outer temple through these paintings, she built her own inner temple. She expressed it thus: 'As I gradually describe the path, I travel it.'

In a traveling exhibition in the spring of 1913 from the Modern Museum of Stockholm, also in Berlin and Málaga, the world became acquainted with an overview of her work, the most complete to date. Hidden as they were for decades in boxes and crates, some works remained unknown until now.

In the entrance, you are welcomed by paintings more than three meters high, clear and light, which give the impression of an atmosphere of a temple. Undoubtedly the exhibition is a tribute to something spectacular, to something of a universal dimension. It is really surprising to imagine that this small woman, in silence and during an apparently ordinary life, produced all these immense works, not only in size but also in conception. Feeling for the first time the spiritual strength

of all life run as a red thread through her art. She painted a series of paintings with symbols and geometrical figures in which the shape of the circle establishes a central recurring theme. Sometimes circles are concentric, sometimes they overlap, sometimes they appear as ellipses, spirals or shells. In one of her writings, *Symbols, Letters and Words*, Hilma af Klint gave the meaning of the symbols that she used in her paintings. 'The shell or the spiral indicates development, blues and reds represent the feminine and the masculine, just as the lily (feminine) and the rose (masculine). W stands for Matter and U for Spirit. The almond shape (vesica pisces) is the ancient symbol for unity and completion.'

The series already mentioned, the 'Paintings for the Temple' (or simply 'The Temple') are her most important works. She described how she developed her first paintings: 'The

Your breath is taken away. It is as if, through the window of your soul, you look into the domains of the micro- and macrocosm

in her work is as impressive as feeling for the first time the majesty and the grandeur of an Egyptian temple, or being confronted for the first time with the sight of the Grand Canyon. Your breath is taken away. It is as if, through the window of your soul, you look into the domains of the micro- and macrocosm. And the idea that she painted for the future, for one hundred years later, and now we are there, face to face, is great and impressive at the same time. We are profoundly touched by the fact that somebody can express something so spectacular and visionary.

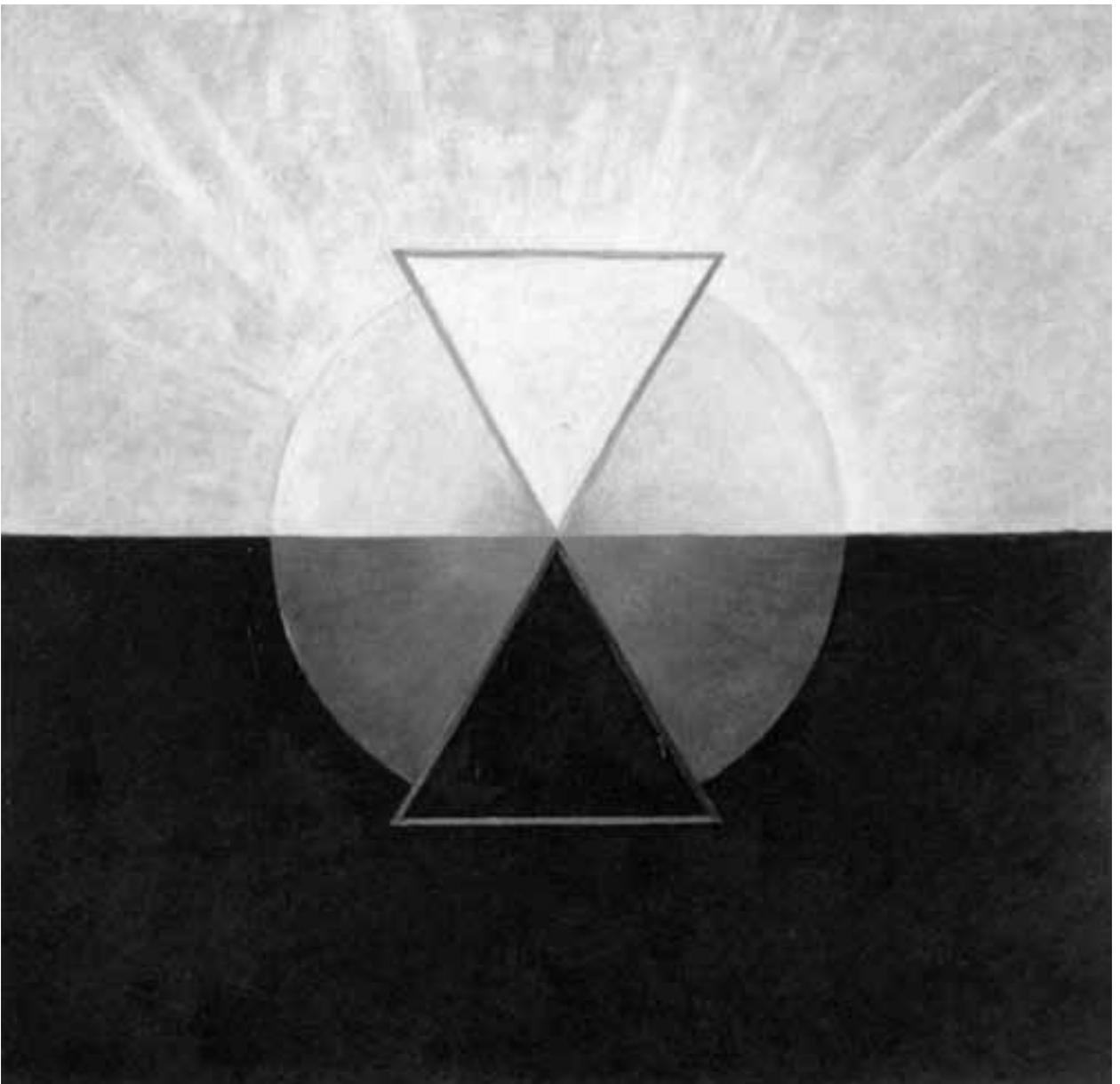
According to her nephew Erik af Klint, to whom Hilma bequeathed all her paintings, sketches and notebooks (placed in a foundation in 1972), his aunt was absolutely not unfamiliar with the world. She was an educated woman and conscious of herself, with both feet firmly planted on the ground, and although she led a modest and pure life, she occupied her place in society. It is striking that her work speaks directly to the heart. At first sight, we have an impression of circles, ovals, triangles and simple and naive cubes, but when looking at it more closely, we discover a complexity in motion. Everything is connected with each other through various stages of development. The series, which are themselves composed of subgroups, have symbolic names such as Atom, Parsifal, Dove, and Sjustjärnan (starfish). Forms constantly appear as if they come from an inexhaustible source. Everything revolves around an inner quest,



A page from a sketchbook on flowers, mosses and fungi

a search for the meaning of life on earth: what are we doing here? What is the meaning of our life, of all these forms of countless lives? Hilma af Klint explores the world in general and in particular. She follows a path from chaos to harmony, from a diminution to a disappearance which opens new spiritual horizons. Challenged, we ceaselessly wish to discover new perspectives. In numerous paint-

The work of **Hilma af Klint** always reflects contradictions, oppositions. In the series *The Tree of Knowledge* of 1913, the watercolours, due to their small size (46 x 30 cm), offer a contrast to the colossal series of *Paintings for the Temple*. The latter are images that take the seeker into an organic cabalistic structure through different spheres of consciousness. We also meet the play of dialectics: masculine and feminine, darkness and light, time and space, life and death.



In her paintings, everything shares in a greater whole and one can observe how the parts relate one to another; a concept that is found in several places in her notes. She was very productive and produced more than a thousand works. She also published her views on the spiritual cohesion of the world in her notebook 'Studies on the life of the soul,' (1917-1918). Additionally her private journals and her notes form a sort of cosmology where she explains how she came to her inspira-

tion and the significance of the symbols and the letters she used. Just as the forms, the images and the letters, the colours held symbolic significance for her. The colours radiate and the dimensions of certain works are gigantic. The paintings have a remarkable modern aspect; an art critic even called them 'ultramodern.' They also contain rays, spirals, ovals, undulating movements, seeks and serpents, together with forms resembling plants and flowers.

ings, opposites appear that are held in mutual balance: yin and yang forms, white and black swans in symbiosis, sometimes pyramids in opposition, and black and white geometrical semicircles. Everything seems to work toward unification, to a conclusion. The central theme of her work is to aspire to this apotheosis, this summit.

'Image of Altars,' belonging to the series 'Paintings for the Temple,' represents a triangle which ends in the sun. The triangle forms a pyramid. At the top of the pyramid, a black triangle with a luminous point is surrounded with a shining golden circle with gold leaves. The triangle and the pyramid can be considered alchemical symbols: the union of earth, the heavens and the universe. The pyramid symbolises the path of a seeker through various dimensions, from earthly to celestial.

We can assume that Hilma af Klint, great colourist, trained as she was, was influenced by the book *Concerning the spiritual in art* by Kandinsky (1911) and probably also by Goethe's colour theory. After 1920, her pictorial style changed again af-

ter meeting Rudolf Steiner. She began to perceive spiritual relationships within nature. She abandoned her geometrical compositions, and after a break of several years, she began painting in watercolour, with the themes subordinate to the colour. She analysed microcosm and macrocosm from the perspective 'what is above is similar to what is below.'

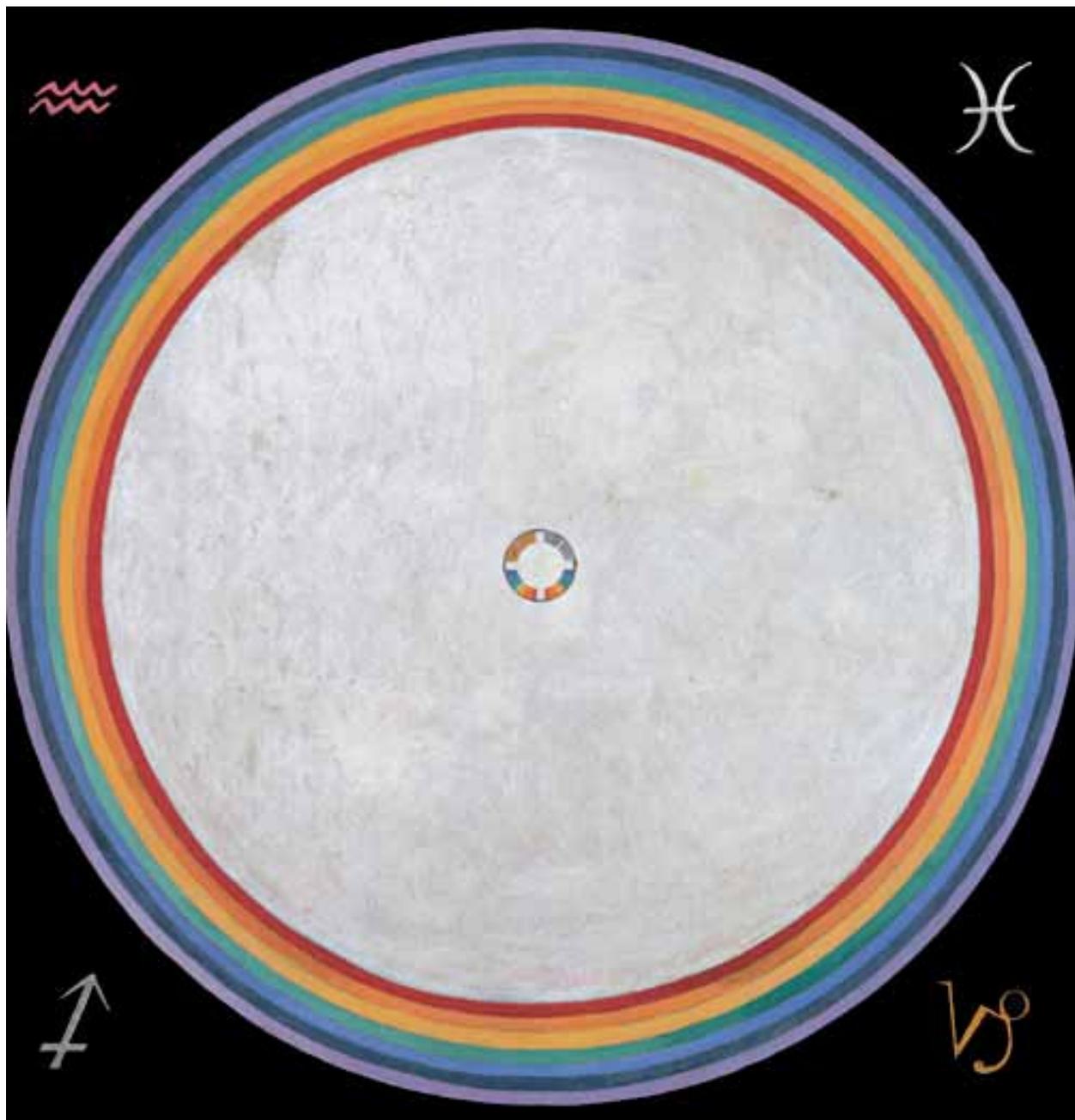
We know that after her meeting with Steiner, she plunged into the Rosicrucian philosophy of that time, and did not paint anymore for two years. Considering the colossal production that she had realised earlier 'in secret' we can deduce that, during this period, she must have been exhausted. Small, thin and ascetic, she lived a withdrawn life and did not seek honours. She dived completely into art and considered herself a humble servant – she never signed her esoteric work. ☸

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- Iris Müller-Wetermann (ed.), *Hilma af Klint – A Pioneer of Abstraction*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm 2013
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The triangle, the circle (and also the pyramid) can be seen as alchemical symbols: the joining of the earth, the heavens and the universe. The painting is the abstract reproduction of the white and the black swans (see. p. 21) according to Hilma af Klint's abstract thinking at the time.

The Swan No. 13, Group IX, 1915



The mobile cross, the seven rays and the liberating cross of Light in the centre. In astrology the square aspect of the Fishes, Gemini, Sagittarius and Virgo stands for a person who is very thoughtful, a person who aspires to service, an open person who strives for a great mobility of spirit. When in the beginning Hilma exhibited her figurative works, she judged that her giant experimental canvases – such as the one shown above, for which her inspiration came from the spiritual world – could not be exhibited until twenty years after her death. According to the artist, her contemporaries were not yet ready to understand them.

From the series *The Dove*: no.14, Group IX, 1915



The artist succeeds in conveying a Christian clarity in conceptual theosophical language and in accompanying the representations of traditional Christianity with a strong esoteric meaning. In imitation of H.P Blavatsky, Hilma saw in the white and the black swans the expression of 'the mystery of the mysteries' and 'the majesty of the spirit'.

From the series The Dove: The Swan, No. 1, Group IX, 1915

on the essence of art

I ART, SCIENCE AND RELIGION

‘**W**ith regard to the arts,’ writes J. van Rijckenborgh, ‘we refer to esoteric, scientific and religious qualities that the average human being has forgotten. Art represents the expression, the aspect of reality, the visual aspect in life, but does not stand alone. We see it as a link in a chain of three – religion, science and art are one. Science is the idea, ideality. Religion is the force that unites with and vitalises the idea. Art, realised in life, becomes reality. Everyone has a certain idea, a certain potential, and in this sense everyone is an artist. What lives in them abstractly as idea and force brings their art to expression. Through art, the abstract is made concrete. [...]’

The aspiring seeker knows that if they activate their heavenly figure they participate in a new life-field, a world in which religion, science and art are one.’

In this sense art is the highest evolutionary and form-giving vocation. Universal knowledge and energy propel freedom-aspiring human beings to realise, to make manifest, the true divine human being ‘in’ their own being. It is well-known, however, that the prevailing comprehension of art no longer knows anything of the tri-unity of science (understanding), religion (power, energy) and art (realisation), having distanced itself and standing apart from this triple cohesion. The resulting one-sidedness and impoverishment is clear to see, especially in many facets of modern art where the fundamental defect becomes clear

too, because the spiritual dimension is usually lacking. J. van Rijckenborgh also wrote: ‘But it is certain that religion, art and science, though unmistakably cultured, do not make human beings any happier. [...] You can cultivate this life and enhance it in a thousand-and-one ways, but that culture cannot liberate you. Your life-culture keeps you busy, possibly feverishly busy, you are taught it and you teach it; but about a kingdom of heaven, on which all metaphysical culture speculates, there is no question.’

As science, religion and art are one, and as these three liberating light-impulses impel to realisation, then art is: the idealistic impulse – universal knowledge; the vital impulse – universal energy; and the realising impulse – universal art. The artist – in principle anyone who starts out from these three impulses and so bears witness to the Light-realm, in form, colour or sound – can bring something of the original life into this world and is thus a bridge-builder.

Mercury is born from the union of the sun and the moon, represented by a young maiden in alchemical art. Her feet rest on the sun and the moon. A blue bird, symbolising a new consciousness, rises from her crowned head. In one hand she holds a chalice with serpents; in the other a crescent moon. It is the expression of wisdom: the lunar or astral forces have been overcome.

Figure from *The rose garden of the philosophers*, a manuscript from the period 1625–1650, now in Paris.

16
Hier ist geboren Solis und Lüne Kindt
Beschrieben niemandt auf Erden findt
Und in die welt doch gern erkennet
Mercurius philosophorū ist Er genant.





However since art is disjointed from its trinity with science and religion and stands alone, it has lost the radiance of the real and is a cultural form without a liberating principle. But it is not useless, for it has the function of breaking things up.

EVERYONE IS AN ARTIST In this context we look for a moment at one of the most influential painters, sculptors and conceptual artists from the previous century, Joseph Beuys (1921- 1986). Beneath a photograph of him running – well-groomed, earnest and determined – he writes: ‘We, ourselves are the revolution.’ He knew the *Tabula Smaragdina* and the *Corpus Hermeticum*, both attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, the threefold master as to spirit, soul and body, in which it says: ‘True science and art come from true religion.’ Due to this insight Joseph Beuys made his best known and often misunderstood statement: ‘Everyone is an artist.’ He arrived at the same conclusion as J.van Rijckenborgh: we constantly sculpt our own life by everything we think, feel and desire.

The only question is how we do so: from what viewpoint, according to what criteria, and with what motivation.

When we determine what the whole range of art in all its nuances signifies, then art is the pure truth and reality of God, unrevealed, ineffable and purely divine. Then there is art in its revealed creation, which is either inspired by divine nature or conforms to the lower

nature of our world where the polarities of positive and negative work against each other and everything formed continually perishes and dissolves. The highest art with regard to us is the human being as microcosm, as image of God in accordance with the original plan of creation. In this sense art becomes the highest form-giving aspect that is free from the time-restricted understanding of art.

There have always been and still are artists who make a bridge from the celestial realm to this world by revealing the spiritual dimension underlying the phenomena of this world. However, a sharp discerning faculty is essential, especially in the field of art, so as not to lose oneself in mystical exaltation and fanaticism.

II EVERYTHING FINDS ITSELF IN THE DIVINE BUT IS NOT NECESSARILY CONSCIOUSLY AWARE OF THE DIVINE

Consciousness can develop in such a way that it can receive a certain impression of the higher, divine reality via the sensorially perceptible material nature. This does not mean, however, that terrestrial nature has no function, or that we should exploit her instead of respecting and caring for her. Such an approach only reduces terrestrial nature to a deception, like limiting a painting by Rembrandt to linen, binders and pigments, or a Mozart Symphony to physical soundwaves. Both would amount to a dogmatic and one-sided notion that holds as real only what can be scientifically and substantially proven. The natural sciences, particularly quantum physics, biophysics and evolutionary biology, investigate the essential nature of matter, the cause underlying the visible, seeking to deliver a precise account to the last detail of our finely attuned universe. Evolutionary biology for example, posits that the living cell is able to organise itself, though one is still confronted with the unsolved enigma of where the information to do so comes from. Where does the information originate which gives form to something? Where does the impulse, the essential vibration originate that results in an animated manifestation? The very question proves the limit of material-bound thinking. Whoever thinks from out of matter can never exceed the limits of matter and can at most ignore them, but will time and again experience them as borders. Though restrained at these borders, modern

physics approaches more and more closely the insight which the Bhagavad Gita, for example, pronounced long ago: 'God is not only transcendental, but everywhere. I am the self in all things, yet the entire universe - all visible energy and matter - emanates from me, as the manifestation of myself.' Perhaps even more beautiful is: 'The self is unborn, imperishable, lord and master of all creation and every creature, nonetheless nature is borne by me, and by my own power and strength I come into manifestation.'

In the light of the Bhagavad Gita, nature is not simply a piece work composed of animate and inanimate things, but an integral unity, an all-embracing organism, animated and formed by invisible forces - a living entirety, inwardly permeated by the divine spirit which brings all things and all human beings to manifestation. But we never forget that not all of what is revealed testifies of divine life and divine activity. Surely everything is given its place in the divine, but long since not all attests to the divine. That is why in the transfiguristic sense we speak of two natures. In the deepest depths of the soul, one can indeed speak of the one nature that upholds everything, that pervades and encompasses everything, including something which, in itself does not live in a conscious connection with the primordial nature, and thus finds itself structurally in a dualistic development.

Here the poles of 'good' and 'evil' work against each other because this development does not



stem from the divine primordial-principle of the logos. The activity emanating from this dualistic development, separated from the arch-source, is a creation in which inevitably a counterforce is present. The result is imperfection, finiteness, imitation.

THE EMERGENCE OF A LIBERATING STATE-OF-BEING The absence of the doctrine of the two natures, or misconception of it, often obscures the value of the personality and its life as the creative bearer of a liberating reality. For in the Gnostic process of renewal the personality is undeniably the only instrument that we in this nature have at our disposal as a means of expression and learning through experience. So the personality that begins with right understanding and right desire, and is thus liberated from I-centrality, will rediscover its true calling. It will find its right value and place when, in purity and surrender, it clearly places itself at the service of the impulses emanating from the primordial principle, the spirit-spark-atom. Its whole life is then connected and attuned to the divine line of development.

A dogmatic comprehension of the two natures as a pillar of the universal teaching is reminiscent of the times of early Christianity when, in the Near East, Syria and Palestine, it was fashionable to sit on a pillar at the side of the road in order to seem to be especially holy. The Saint on the pillar represents the human being who, directed entirely toward the divine, turns away from the unholy natural life. The two

main characters in the play by Samuel Beckett *Waiting for Godot* say: 'Let's go. We can't. Why not? We're waiting for Godot.' These two characters symbolise humanity; they place us before the decisive question of our times. To this day humanity still waits for Godot, for God – in other words, waits for 'an impulse from outside' because, as it is said, all activity comes forth from the Father.

But the evangelist John makes it active by placing the divine **in** the human being, when he cites Christ in John 5:17: 'My father still works, so I work too...' The new soul-power, the other one in us (indeed one with the divine), then becomes the leading principle in the human being, and that is the meaning of Aquarius. We are all seized by the magical effect of the creative processes. Not only are we connected with these developments that daily keep us busy in one form or another, but at the same time we are a part of them and work with them. We are co-creators of what is unceasingly energised and accomplished, and at every moment we are creative and busy shaping the reality. We are all accomplishing and creative beings. Why do we put such emphasis on this? Because in the currently commencing Aquarius era it is precisely this aspect of implementation, of making real, that plays an absolutely central and crucial role. Everyone who perceives the desire, the inner impulse to break through the matrix that imprisons them, is an artist.

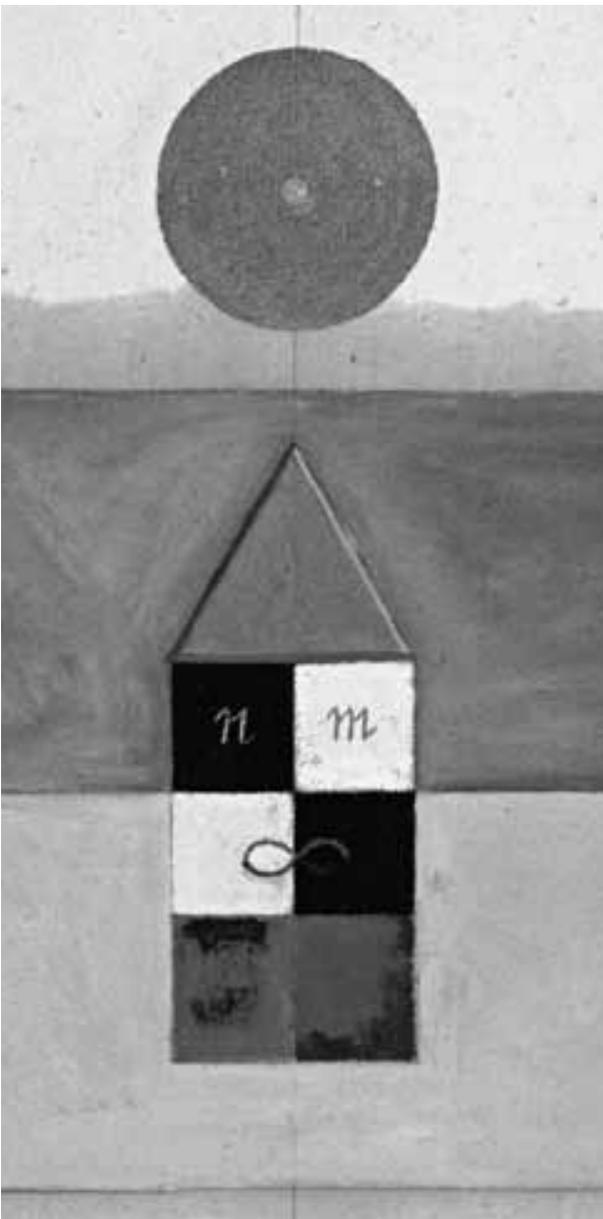


III ARTWORK AS BRIDGE BUILDER

The human being as artist who lives from the Christ impulse, without which nothing can be done, goes beyond the borders of material-bound consciousness in love for the world and humanity and is a tireless observer of all that lives and is.

The actual work of art develops from their new thinking and new life while the diverse current developments, methods and resources are fully taken into account. The creative power of such an artist is intuitive. New Gnostic energies, emanating from the spirit-spark, the rose of the heart, unite with the pituitary gland as the true creative organ and flow into his or her creation. Creative power is inspired when the soul-life is illuminated by the spirit. In this way he or she works, full of energy and light in the prospect of a liberated humanity.

In this sense, art goes far beyond 'washing the everyday grime from the soul,' as Picasso put it. Pure art will lead humanity to gnostic knowing and change, restoring unity. For centuries, humanity as autonomous creator-of-reality has been pushed into the background by external influences because the Christ spirit within has been ignored. But just as the Christian martyrs of original Christianity, more and more people are turning away from authoritarian influences. They reserve the right to give meaning to their lives as soul and spirit human beings in self-authority. Humans want to be serious about the unfulfilled promise, 'You will be as God, discerning good and evil.'



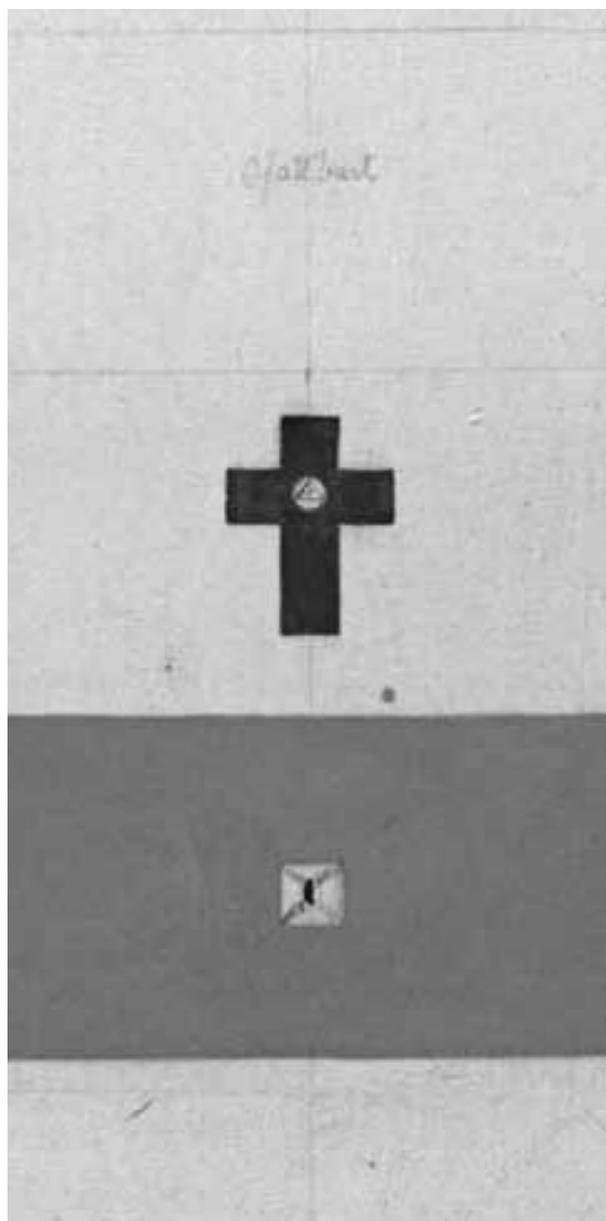
Hilma af Klint No. 4, Series V (left) and No. 5, Series IV, (right)

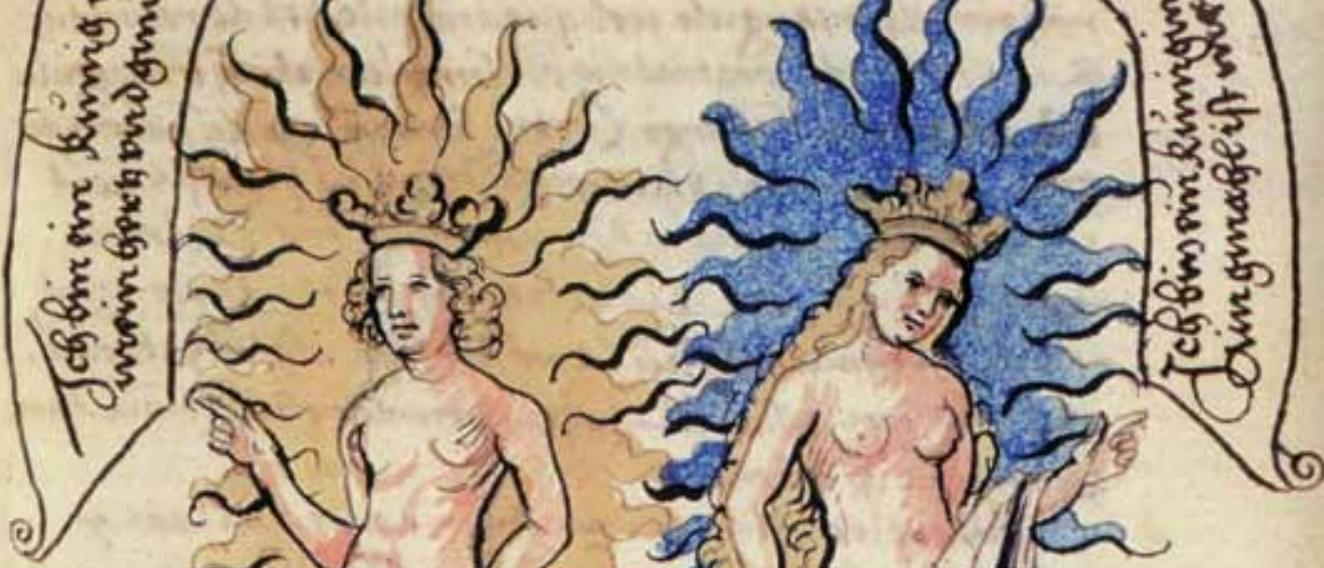
SELF-REVOLUTION – CONSCIOUSNESS – CREATION For Rosicrucians, the ongoing self-revolution is the endura, the victory over the I-being. They behold and heed all things with the heart and confront the demands of our time with new soul quality, because ‘one cannot solve the problems on the same level on which they arise,’ as Albert Einstein put it. In other words, it will not arrive from the manifested, for that has already given its power. It comes from the unrevealed, the incalculable, exclusively from and through what the spirit manifests.

The solution for the problem is in the ‘space’ of what is yet to be revealed. The artist – every human being aspiring to self-realisation – summons it by means of their attunement and life-state, drawing it into observable space, placing it in the light of revelation and revealing it through sound, form, life and movement, all made possible through the purified powers of creation. The totality of this chain of creation depends entirely upon one’s state of consciousness.

At the crucifixion on Golgotha, the place of the skull, the human being is confronted with three crosses, three states of consciousness.

The first cross symbolises the human being for whom the material world is the only observable reality, where the totality of their consciousness is concentrated right up until the moment of death. They are and remain with their material thinking, feeling and willing, nailed to the cross of nature, and cannot





yet enter the kingdom of heaven. The second cross symbolises the human being who has understood, or who knows at the last moment of their life, in the face of death, that they are a child of God. This insight frees them from the matter-restricted consciousness and allows them to enter the kingdom of heaven. To this human being it is said, 'Today you will be with me in paradise.'

The third cross symbolises the human being who beholds the material world in which they live via their spirit-soul consciousness. For them, the words apply, 'They are in the world but not of the world.' They and the father are one. Although they understand that the consciousness restricted to the material world does not understand them, they continue faithfully with their spiritual observance. Jesus answered the Jews (John 8:54-55), 'If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing; it is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say that he is your God. But you have not known him; I know him.'

One's state of consciousness determines one's creative activity and therewith the essence of the art. The influences in the commencing Aquarius Era, closely linked with Uranus, work powerfully on the consciousness. This is similar to the influences during the renaissance 600 years ago where the prevailing forms of expression and dogma were, along with other things in art, broken up. An example is the development of a new sense of space by the application and command of

perspective in painting. The perception of art alone induced an enormous change in consciousness which led to the onset of fear and rejection in the minds of many people. (You can read about perspective in the book *Ursprung und Gegenwart [The Ever-Present Origin]* by Jean Gebser, which deals with this leap in consciousness, among other things.)

Again at the beginning of the twentieth century, understanding of the entire time-spatial order was placed in a totally new framework. Space and time were seen as relative in both art and science. Picasso produced diverse spatial images on one plane, introducing Cubism into art. In the same period at the beginning of the 20th century, 1905-1907, Einstein formulated the theory of relativity, in which he scientifically established the relativity of time.

THE NEW DIMENSION AND THE CHRIST FORCE

Today space and time recede, the two are combined, and one speaks of space-time. News of world events is mostly delivered to all people in all places at the same time via the electronic media of television and internet, be it an incident at the nuclear power-plant in Fukushima, the revolutions and wars in the Near East, or the debt crisis in the European Union. Thinking in three dimensions is worn out, and appears in a different light in the setting of time-space relativity. We find ourselves on the threshold of a new dimension. Universal knowledge and the universal force are impelled to fruition.



What are the characteristics of this new dimension? Insight – the deep inner knowing that science as ‘universal knowledge,’ religion as ‘universal force’ and art as ‘reality accomplished in life’ are one – overcomes the traditional time-restricted notion of art and leads to an absolutely new concept of art that is free of all theory and partiality. J. van Rijckenborgh expressed this thought with the words ‘everyone is an artist.’ That is to say, in their reality-of-life, every human being has a creative potential and a power at their disposal to change that reality. Due to the effect of the increasing Aquarius radiations, the consciousness is now awakening in many people that the creative nucleus-power in us is the Christ-energy, and that without this energy, we can do nothing.

By and large there is a growing recognition that anything not originating from this energy is built on sand. This new yet ever-present dimension opens before us, just as perspective appeared in the Renaissance. It creates a new consciousness in us, so that in the future the Christ-energy will become the basis for all form-giving processes – individually, regarding the true human being, as well as on the collective social level regarding a true human community: the New Jerusalem.

IV RENEWAL OF ALL OF HUMANITY

How can human beings allow their thinking, feeling and acting to be penetrated and led by this central insight? Through a fundamental renewal of heart and head so that true longing purifies feelings, thinking and the activities of the will. Through this one can be led to renewing realisation with the words of the Lord’s Prayer, ‘Lord, your will be done.’ This prayer is not an abstract prescription. Hermetic thinking always departs from the concrete aspect, meaning that in the absolute now we must observe our feelings, thoughts and activities of the will. Only through experience of concrete situations can we obtain self-knowledge. Based on this self-knowledge we will be able to check if our present abilities meet the requirements of the path of liberation. Purification and conversion – transformation and transfiguration – become possible in this way. Because the human being transforms himself, he changes his activities and becomes the focus of the arts in this context, directed toward the greatest possibilities of the creative self. The pituitary gland and the spinal cord, with the serpent fire circulating therein as vibrating energy, are very important in this process, this alchemical transformation concerning humans as creative beings. The changes in the electromagnetic atmosphere that we have been experiencing ever more strongly in the dawning period of Aquarius have a direct influence on

the pituitary gland. This little regulator, which steers the activities of the adrenal and thyroid glands into harmonious directions, is the connection between the central nervous system and the management of the hormones. It also regulates reproduction.

Therefore we can easily imagine that the increased activity of the pituitary gland urges the human being to more and more creative actions. In addition there is the serpent fire, around which revolves literally the complete creative activity of the human being. In the ancient wisdom it was said: the sons and the daughters of the fiery serpent, they are the true artists of God's mercy. They know the art of control and soothing. They know the art of healing. They know the art of recreating, of giving birth again. The complete renewal of the life of the human being takes place via the pituitary gland and around the serpent fire, with which the consciousness, the nerves and the blood are directly connected as important attributes of the soul.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE ARTISTIC

CREATION From the foregoing it appears that artistic creation is seen as the activity of the consciousness – uniting and vitalising – and as the shedding of blood – offering and nourishing, just as the pelican feeds her young with her own blood.

With the artistic process of creating and transfiguring, the aim is to liberate the rose of the heart, that creative nucleus with its associated

creative abilities, in the human being in order that the divine works become known – so that once more what has been concealed in the mystery is created. The aim is the manifestation of the unknowable so that it can be made known everywhere possible in order to deliver and heal the world and humanity.

UNIVERSAL ART Art has not only an individual and a collective dimension. Art also works atmospherically and does not limit itself to an isolated work, one human being, group of people or one country. The method of truly universal art works with enlightening atmospheric forces, so that world and humanity independent of place or time can be touched. This touch occurs via the consciousness, nervous system and the blood, the three most important aspects of the soul as stated above. It is in this manner that the modern Rosycross works with the Christ energy. The workplace is the field of revelation of genesis. The carriers of the spirit-spark are the potential. And the atmosphere is the primary field of projection.

Which concrete task is connected with that? A truly living human is a new, creative human

The great work of the alchemical art results among other things in the equilibrium of the opposites, indicated by the red tree of the sun and the blue tree of the moon which become connected through the hermaphroditic figure in the centre.

Buch der heiligen Dreifaltigkeit, ca. 1410-1419, currently in Berlin



being. In the first instance creative working means making creative thoughts concrete, in other words making the invisible understandable, recognisable, perceptible. That is only possible if one opens up to the yet unrevealed and unknown striving for manifestation. That implies that we free ourselves from every idea of how something is or should be, thus be free of any dogmatic thinking. Therefore we pull the 'nail' out of our brain, the nail that fixes us to the lower, time-spatial order.

Imagine that the thought of group-unity enveloped all human beings. That calls for a truly world-wide 'social artwork' that is able to receive all seeking humans who strive for self-realisation, offering them the necessary true freedom so that they are able to allow all their skills and abilities to become fruitful for the goal of the *unio mystica* and *the una sancta*. This new truly 'social figure' can no longer be derived from the powers of this world.

We cannot transfer our bourgeois concept of organisations and our individual striving for success to that for its true basis is the Holy Supper. In every situation, in each moment of living, the 'bread' and the 'wine' are shared with everyone, with all of humanity, so that divine love and true neighbourly love can become visible.

RESURRECTION AS THE ART OF SUCCESSFUL CLOSURE, CROWNING OF COMPLETION The high aim of all this is ultimately the resurrection, the work of completion. Why?

Because this goal of resurrection and completion is the only unchanging and eternally universal goal. It has been, from the beginning and during the entire path of change, the only point of reference that has kept the human being who is striving for liberation steadfast through all turbulence, storms and obstructions – as a fixed star, as it were, shining its light over everything. The resurrection is no wishful dream, nor is it beautiful make-believe. Resurrection is the art of completion of the divine plan for world and humanity and it always begins today, in the now.

What phases can be distinguished in light of the creative development toward resurrection? The preparation for the new creation and resurrection takes place through purification and bidding farewell: self-knowledge and the reversal of the self. That is art in its preparatory revelation. The realisation of the divine plan of creation takes place through a process of a seven-fold renewal through the event of the holy supper. That is the basis for going the path of the rose and the cross: self-surrender, self-reversal and self-realisation. The resurrection manifests itself when all form has died, when the cross has been conquered. The resurrection is art in its completed revelation.

▼ THE CREATIVE PERSON AS DRIVING FORCE

If a striving human being is artistically active in the sense described, then with every heartbeat something is realised in and through him. With each heartbeat something is created either to fulfilment or to gain further experience. With each heartbeat the drive of the logos creates a path within him or her. With each heartbeat the Light of the Gnosis, the Light of Jesus Christ, is born within. With each heartbeat space is created within for the Light, the Light ignites, the flame of insight flares, renewing to purification, liberation and new creation. This continuous touch by the Light, generated from heartbeat to heartbeat, is like the sound of trumpets and the beat of the kettledrum spoken of in the holy writings. Trumpets and kettledrums, meaning divine vibrations and rhythm, bring about unmasking, clarity, longing, structure, movement and life in each moment. They are the creative driving forces and they make use of all methods and means to speed the attainment of their goal, the creation, the perfection.

These divine vibrations do not reach people from out of the past but from out of the future, for there in the future is the human being whom we can learn to know. Nothing and nobody can impede the truly longing and striving human being in this matter, even though incessantly tried and seemingly blocked. There is no other power than that of the only God that might even alter the fulfilment of his plans. There is only one plan of creation for world and humanity, and that one



Hilma af Klint The Dove, No. 5, Series IX, 1915

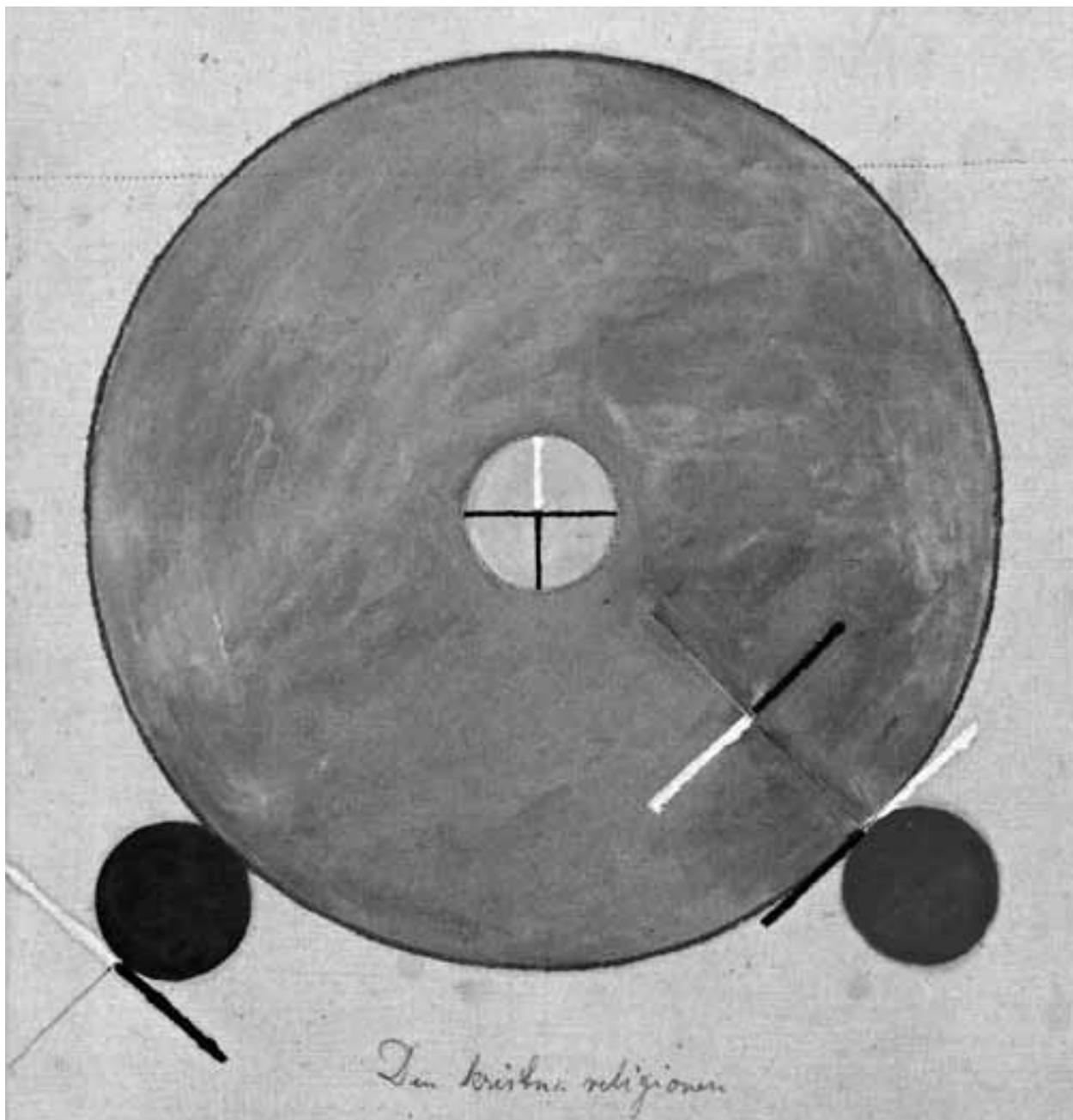
consists of making the divine works known right through all obstruction and baseness.

THEARS MAGICA As the Bible shows, all of creation longs for salvation. After the former evolution led by the hierophants of the Light has been closed, this task must now be fulfilled by humanity through their inner creative energy, in the love of Christ. That is set down in the divine plan of creation. And the end of creation with world and humanity is the miracle of the resurrection, the highest fulfilment, the completion of all divine works. That is the divine art in its truly perfect glory. Thus the Light descends into the prepared human being, it 'dies' in him – that is the art of the endura, the art of self-surrender. When the Light in a human being has died and been buried in a prepared grave, the resurrection is not far off. Then one might talk about the magic of the renewal through the Light of Christ, the Light of the redeemer and liberator.

And then what surpasses every imagined creative revelation becomes reality: the change and the externalisation of the mortal personality through transfiguration. That is the magic art of making gold – the complete change of the consciousness, the raising once more of the tree of life, obtaining the true gold through the dissolving and joining of fire (consciousness), water (nerve fluid) and blood – *flamma, natura, mater*. That is the essence and the fulfilment of everything that art is able to accomplish: *the ars magica*. And it is the core

idea of all of the entire creation, of the Logos. Everything longs for that, for the revelation of the children of God – that they will be known, that they will be created anew through the royal art of self-surrender, through being born again, through resurrection. When this universal, creative and realising impulse begins to resound in the human being, an energising insight may come into being. Then a new process of creation is initiated within the human being that via the consciousness gradually encompasses the whole system. Ideality and vitality culminate in the reality of true incarnation.

In this way people are able to be active participants in the divine process of creation. The liberating creativity then works in them and through them. It is then inwardly recognised that this gnostic Light impulse is the divine sound of the trumpet that makes everything truly new and transformed. With a similar surrender the human being is able to spontaneously and artlessly come to a new mode of life, consisting of allowing in the luminous, new creative life force and letting it work in and through him. Then this person can consciously say: 'The Lord has truly risen in my microcosm. The work is accomplished.' ❀



In this image the artist places the circle with the cross of redemption of the Christian religion in the centre of her microcosmic experience, with Islam to the left and Buddhism to the right.

The Christian religion, No. 3rd, Series II, 1920

an impulse from the finnish brotherhood

THE ROSICRUCIAN WISDOM OF PEKKA ERVAST



Ilmarinen, the hero of the Kalevala, forges the Sampo (a magic mill that gives prosperity). The tapestry depicts rune X from the Finnish national epic. Tapestry by J. Alanen, 1898

He was once called ‘the figurehead of the arctic gnosis’. That makes a cold and chilly impression, but the works of the Finnish wisdom teacher Pekka Ervast (1875 – 1934) are rather heartwarming. Ervast wrote everything in Finnish and therefore his work was for a long time known only in his home country. Rudolf Steiner recognised his great gifts and visited him in Helsinki in 1912. Now that his spiritual heritage gradually emerges from seclusion, thanks to translations of his work, awareness is also growing outside Finland that Pekka Ervast is one of the Light-bearers-through-the-ages who inspire every searcher after truth.



Humans have something inside that inspires from within. We have an inner, invisible, immaterial life. We are spiritual beings with a soul that makes us citizens of another spiritual, invisible world just as our physical body lives in a visible world. Our thoughts and feelings are not traceable solely to physical functions; they can also be directed in such a way that one can as a soul – as a thinking, feeling and willing ego – extract inspiration from the divine world.

Behold in a nutshell the deeply spiritual vision of the duality of the Finnish philosopher, poet and author Pekka Ervast. As an erudite man he offered a great contribution to the development of the spiritual climate of his country during the first decade of the twentieth century. Only in the last decade, through German and English translations, has it also become clear outside Scandinavia how penetrating the Light message of Pekka Ervast has been. His insights are contained in more than 1300 public lectures, in nearly a hundred books and in translations into Finnish of books like the *Tao Te Ching* and the *Dhammapada*, the aphoristic wisdom of the Buddha.

ORPHANED HUMANITY Pekka Ervast was a bright and intelligent lecturer concerning the most probing questions in the fields of philosophy, theosophy and the most diverse religions. His message reaches the seeker after truth in all walks of life. His works have spread across hundreds of thousands of Finnish homes.

Through his extensive work he has become – and still is – the undisputed wisdom teacher of the Finnish nation. From the outset Ervast appears to have had the ability to awaken spiritual activity in interested truth-seekers.

‘We humans find ourselves in the same state of condemnation and therein we could help each other. If we realise this, our heart bleeds. It cries: don’t you see? We should live as brothers and sisters, but we cannot achieve that harmony. We are so stupid, so unintelligent, yes: so blind.’

But fortunately the vision of the Finnish seer is compassionate. The first truth that a sincere seeker finds is that humanity is ‘orphaned’ and unhinged from its divine origin. In the universal wisdom teaching, this is often referred to with the image of humanity as ‘the son of the widow’. On our way back to our origins humanity is usually accompanied by many painful experiences and the insights arising from them. ‘The classic knowledge that arises through pictures and books is not sufficient, because this knowledge is incomplete and always depends upon imagination. What is needed is knowledge by all of our senses gained through physical experience, which is often painful, so that it comes back into our soul as living knowledge. Such knowledge we can, as it were, see, hear, smell and taste.’

JESUS AND THE CHRIST Pekka Ervast Elias was born in Helsinki on December 26, 1875. His religious education began in the Evangeli-



A meeting of the friends at the Rosycross House in Finland. Pekka Ervast is the second from the right

cal Lutheran Church. According to him Jesus Christ appeared to him at the age of eighteen. That might explain why he clearly described the relationship between Jesus and the Christ: 'Jesus of Nazareth was a man in whom Christ or the Son of God had developed in such a way that those who saw Jesus Christ, also saw the father. Jesus was a man like us all. And because Jesus was fulfilled by Christ, his works, words, thoughts and feelings in essence were works, words, thoughts and feelings of the (one) son of God.'

Ervast began to study Roman languages and later Indian religious history, Sanskrit and philosophy. In 1896, when he was 21 years old, he had his spiritual rebirth and left the university because there was 'no really serious search for the meaning of life.' We recognise

Self-emptying and self-denial

All dialectic wisdom, both intellectual and esoteric, is foolishness for the Divine Human Being. Consequently, the modern Rosycross knowingly launches an attack against all esoteric views and conclusions of the earthly human being. The idea is not that the 'I', now bound to the lower human being, must, at a given moment, find its True Self and be united with it. No, the true 'I', the true divine Spark, lies in the True Self, and this true divine spark of the Heavenly Self must be liberated from the 'I' of the earthly person.

such an experience and change from the lives of many other Light Bearers, for example, those of Gottfried Arnold and Peter Deunov. In art, it was the time of symbolism, the reaction to realism. The artist was more interested in invisible reality than in the faithful portrayal of reality. Furthermore during those years the art movement called Karelianism emerged, an art movement in which artists, inspired by the national epic poem *Kalevala*, traveled to Eastern Finland and Karelia (now largely Russian) to find material for authentic Finnish art. Karelianism represented Finland in the strongest form of national romanticism and reached its peak in the paintings of Gallen-Kallela and in the music of Sibelius.

No wonder Ervast would later tie in with this tradition, with his profound esoteric interpretations of the *Kalevala*. But first he immersed himself in detail in the works of Plato, Eckhart, Seuse, Tauler, Paracelsus and Bruno. They will be life-long points of reference for his Gnostic discoveries. In 1907 he was involved in the founding of the Finnish section of the Theosophical Society, in which Ervast became *ylisihteeri* (a kind of chief secretary). In that capacity he met Rudolf Steiner who in 1912 attended the annual meeting of the Finnish Theosophical Society in Helsinki.

ROSYCROSS Different reactions to the First World War created a distance between the international leadership of the Theosophical Society and Ervast, who then focused on

So, we reverse the matter: the earthly person who wants to be liberated must perish! The Other One, the divine son of God, must increase and the earthly person must *decrease*. How does this come about? It comes about by self-emptying and self-denial, by self-elimination and self-effacement of the entire dialectic human being, with the help of the Hierarchy of Christ, through whom we receive the necessary strength. It comes about by scientifically attacking all our mainstays, all our cherished idiosyncrasies and sacrosanct beliefs; in

other words, all our delusions. It comes about by unseating all those so-called higher faculties of the earthly person and the entire magic potential connected therewith, which can always be explained as proceeding from one's nature built in the past. It comes about through clearing the way for the true divine being, as one who preaches penitence, as a mendicant, as a precursor; who speaks like John the Baptist: 'He must increase and I must decrease.' *Dei Gloria Intacta*, J. van Rijckenborgh, Haarlem 1957.

a separate, esoteric section of the Society. This discord ultimately led to his abandoning Theosophy. In 1920, he initiated a new society called *Ruusu Risti*, literally translated: Rosycross. 'The name Rosycross points to the religious language of the new society. The Rosycross investigates all religions and mythologies. In this research it makes contact with the mysteries of Jesus Christ and strives to live in their spirit. It also brings the essential spirit of the Christian faith to life and helps the western churches to understand the symbolic, mystical and veiled meaning of its teachings. As a living spiritual power the Rosycross cleans and renews the inner and outer life of the faithful,' it says in the Declaration of Principles of *Ruusu Risti*.

In 1978, forty-four years after his death, one of Ervast's ideals from the pioneer period of the *Ruusu Risti* Fellowship is still realised. They had started to construct residential communities where serious truth-seekers could stay and work on their spiritual development in serene conditions and in service. In total three communes with forty members each were founded.

In addition, the work of Ervast continued in two societies: *Kristosofia* and *Ruusu Risti*. The latter group, consisting of 900 to 1000 pupils, has contacts with the current Finnish pupils of *Lectorium Rosicrucianum* through the exchange of lectures. *Ruusu Risti*'s approach to the spiritual path is illustrated by the fact that their public work includes a chapter from

Dei Gloria Intacta by J. van Rijckenborgh: The esoteric aspects of the New Man.

PATH OF INITIATION Ervast's masterpiece is perhaps *The key to the Kalevala*, his interpretation of the 1849 Finnish national epic *Kalevala*. The text is a collection of songs that were sung for centuries by ordinary and usually poor people during their daily activities. The multi-talented Finnish doctor Elias Lönnrot (1802-1884) collected thousands of these songs, visiting people's homes during six summer trips throughout all districts, often singing with them. From this wealth of original Finnish texts, Lönnrot made subtle choices, arranging them with insight so that a fairly coherent story is formed.

Central to the epic are the turbulent events surrounding a particular object, the Sampo, which was forged at the behest of *Wainamoinen*, the seer, thinker, singer and shaman. In the poem, the Sampo is described as a kind of mill that grinds flour, salt and money and thus brings prosperity. That is also the reason that everyone wants to possess the Sampo. The epic poem (now translated into more than sixty languages) was initially interpreted historically. It seemed to be a reflection of a supposed Golden Age that served well in the process of reconstruction of the Finnish identity. Later, the mythological explanation prevailed. Nowadays, people are generally convinced that the *Kalevala* is a cultural product of the nineteenth century. Ervast departed



Words of wisdom never disappear

The Kalevala consists of fifty runes, or chapters. Elias Lönnrot composed them from long-existing songs and ballads and returned them to his people in the form of this epic poem. This work has been translated into all European languages and also into Chinese, Japanese and Fulfulde, an African language spoken in Ivory Coast, Ghana, Cameroon and Benin, among other countries. Despite its specific Finnish character, the Kalevala does not easily give its meaning to the Finns, only a few of whom were initially

drastically from those beliefs, publishing in 1916 a sensational and groundbreaking explanation: the Kalevala establishes a connection with a nascent Finnish inner Christianity and symbolises a path of initiation! (see box)

ONE IDENTITY: THE CHRIST Despite his intense involvement in the national epic poem, Ervast was averse to any nationalism. In his eyes there exists for the true seeker and knower of God – regardless of nationality – but one identity, that of the Christ. ‘In Christ, all human souls are united. They form one great mystical body in which the Logos of humanity, Christ, is clothed. That is the *Corpus Christi!*’

‘Unfortunately for the people of his day Ervast lived and worked in language with very restricted use and in a small country that was isolated at the time. He was well versed in all major religions and in many diverse cultures. As a *uomo universale* he lived in truth and love, in a permanent focus on the divine,’ wrote his biographer John Major Jenkins.

The beneficial effect of the light-activity of the texts of Pekka Ervast is only beginning – reluctantly – to be recognised worldwide. According to Pekka Ervast the Sampo symbolises the spiritual body that has been completed. The fact that it ultimately breaks into smithereens means that the Sampo, the origin

The Kalevala unveiled

The three main characters of the epic cannot be called gods nor heroes, but rather beings or entities. They are Wainamoinen, the old bard; Ilmarinen, the blacksmith; and Lemminkainen, the carefree fellow, the power of the future. They express themselves in a curious, literally super-human language with a super-human meaning, sometimes figuring almost as monsters in a puzzling tale. Ilmarinen forges the Sampo (a magic mill that gives prosperity) for a strange area where the so-called elder brothers live, a brotherhood of humanity of more primitive people than the Finns. He makes it on the urging of Wainamoinen. The story is continued in another remote area where all kinds of events take place as time goes by. But at a certain moment Wainamoinen and Ilmarinen are forced to reclaim the Sampo from abroad. On the dangerous and threatening return voyage, unfortunately the Sampo is smashed to smithereens.

*‘Wainamoinen, ancient minstrel,
Saw the fragments of the treasure
Floating on the billows landward,
Fragments of the lid in colours,
Much rejoicing, spake as follows:
“Thence will come the sprouting seed-grain,
The beginning of good fortune,
The unending of resources,
From the ploughing and the sowing,
From the glimmer of the moonlight,
From the splendour of the sunshine,
On the fertile plains of Suomi,
On the meads of Kalevala.’*

able to read the epic since the upper echelon in the country was Swedish-speaking. It took some time before the epic acquired its place in the collective consciousness of the Finns. Now the Kalevala makes its mark in many areas of Finnish life. 'Kalevalisms' have a permanent place in Finnish culture, for example in their own names. Today Finns, with names such as Mariatta, Ilmari or Kalervo borrowed from the Kalevala, live in Tapiola (the area of the god of the forests) or in the Kalevalastreet. They can read newspapers with names

like Sampo, Kaleva or Kaleva-people and can also take part in the Kaleva-games, the annual athletic championships. But Pekka Ervast was the first who recognised the national epic as a 'holy book'. As a motto for his esoteric analysis, he used a quotation from the seventeenth rune: 'Knowledge cannot be hidden and stored in a secret subterranean hole. Words of wisdom never disappear and are incorruptible, only wise people die!'

of wisdom and the herald of happiness, is not restricted to a single human individual. The Sampo must fall into pieces so that everyone can receive a piece.

But what about the permanence of the Sampo? Does a great mystery lie behind it?

The future resurrection is hidden behind the loss of the Sampo, says Ervast. That is the law of life. For everything that is lost spiritually, the spirit will return there. Then everything will be regained. One who loses his life will gain eternal life.

The end of the Kalevala is gripping: the episode of Mariatta, the chaste maiden and her child who makes Wainamoinen leave. Here the entire epic receives a rendition that makes it completely understandable: Christianity gains a foothold in Finland, but very impersonally and detached from time and space. Mariatta must see that the child escapes the brutal Ruutus, who has a similar role to Herod. Nowhere are we reminded of the historical Jesus. Wainamoinen takes a troubled leave from his people at the time that Christianity enters and the son is baptised.

'The last uncertainty disappeared from Wainamoinen's mind. A tear ran down his wrinkled cheek and a burden fell from his shoulders.

'Yes, my son, thou art the victor,' whispered his heart full of joy, 'and I am now free to depart, also free to return joyfully. Thanks and glory to the Creator.' Then the old man baptised him, and called this precious child king and lord of all Karelia and guardian of the all.' ❀

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honey

It happened while I spread honey on bread for my two-year-old grandson. He loved it! Removing the knife from the jar, I smelled, at that instant, the sweet smell of the honey. I thought that it was of such sweetness that if the bread were mouldy, we would not even notice it. Suddenly, with this knife full of honey, a new world opened in front of me. It had bothered me for ages, this question which would not leave me alone, it worried me night and day. I finally put my finger on the answer. How is it possible to receive an answer so suddenly? And not just any random answer! It was a very broad understanding that I had not possessed even yesterday. Unmistakably it was the effect of the honey on the slice of bread. The escalation of violence, the sudden attacks against people with disturbing looks, fights, attacks with explosives, clashes and shootings, stunning events, little schemes of all kinds. – all this had worried me for months as I tried to see and to understand what was happening. Was I the only one to observe all these things? I never heard anyone speaking about the scale of all these changes while I – I felt grabbed by the throat. I had the impression that during the previous generation, the general situation had also been very serious but infinitely more quiet, and it would be similar for the next generation following the current one. Should we look for the cause in the sixties and their assorted revolutions? Even then I was comparing things with the previous period. And when I looked towards the future, I certainly thought,

where is it going to lead? What will happen to the human race? Everything seemed to be deteriorating. I could not sleep anymore. I had a feeling of isolation. When I listened to others talk, it was only about local events. However, I knew that something enormous was going on and that it concerned everybody. I could not name it. Strangely, however, my concern was accompanied with a sense of expectation. Somewhere inside me I felt happy about it, but that was so contradictory that I was despondent. Was I witness to the collapse of human civilisation? Was that possible? All that humanity had built seemed to tremble on its foundations. All the reasoning that I employed to find an explanation reached a dead end. But I had always expected a lot with respect to the progress of civilisation. And now I became aware that all that I had held in high respect turned out to be ... honey on mouldy bread! When the bread is fresh, it is necessarily good. But it always eventually becomes mouldy. I realise that it's the same for any praiseworthy effort in the world. With time, everything changes. Everything around us, absolutely everything, eventually becomes distorted. I know well that it is the law of nature. What happened to make me suddenly see it so clearly? Once again, I feel both dismay and expectation, but my morale is not affected. I am satisfied with this awareness. But how to live with this ambivalence? I hardly understand myself. Nevertheless, I remove the knife from the jar of honey to once again spread it over the

bread. This time my attention is somewhere else. I become a big question mark in spite of the vast knowledge that I earned a moment ago. I straighten my grandson on his chair. Quite happily he talks with his mouth completely full. And it evokes for me an image of the tower of Babel. Perhaps it is a good image for our civilisation. So many old cultures disappeared when they reached a summit. They all became mouldy. Nevertheless a certainty, completely new in myself, reminds me that

Was I witness to the collapse of human civilisation?

there is something just and authentic in the act of building. Deep in my heart, I know that to build is a necessity; if this inclination is a part of being human, it is not for nothing. But where, then, is the mistake? In the foundations, or still lower? Could the construction plan be erroneous? If that were the case, it could not produce something even if the builders were diligent and honest. I am inwardly aware that a new possibility emerges. It does not mean the continuation of my life on a higher plane but is something unimaginable that gives only the foretaste of beauty. Even so, nothing will be as before, neither in the world blocked with all the wreckage, nor in myself where a whole civilisation has collapsed. But not hope and trust. They remain as burning embers and cast light on my actual state of being. In that light shall I live and build. 🌟

marcus aurelius, the roman emperor-philosopher

'In the life of man time is but a moment and existence a continuous flow. Our reasoning is only a flickering night candle, the body prey to worms, the soul a restless maelstrom, our fate dark and reputations most dubious.'

'Every man is gladdened with other things. For myself I am happy when my inner compass functions well and is not turned from the people and their doings but if it observes mildly and accepts and uses everything in accordance with its worth.' 'For sure, there is a secret power hidden deep within us which guides our motives. That is the origin of that persuasive voice in us and therein lies the root of life. There, we could say, is man truly himself.'

Three quotes from a Roman emperor-philosopher from the second century, statements both powerful and wise. But before one is able to tune one's inner compass to this 'origin,' to one's inner being, it is imperative to recognise and accept the relativity and ephemerality of all things earthly, including oneself.

The letters of Marcus Aurelius with their examples taken from real life direct us to a renewed reflection on life. In these letters he reflects on the relativity, the transitoriness, the ephemerality of everything on this earth and the necessity of an ever-constant nature as well as the advancement process of humanity. These are a few of the subjects that held the attention of this stoic emperor-philosopher during his turbulent life.

Marcus Aurelius lived from 121 – 180 AD and in 161, rather against his will, became emperor of the immense Roman realm – truly a global empire according to the standards of that time in which both the social and cultural aspects of its society had risen to great

heights. The nobility lived in opulent villas and everywhere in the empire, most notably in Rome, great and glorious buildings were erected, constructed most ingeniously and artistically.

Straight roads were built in all their countries as well as clever constructions such as aqueducts which were linked to enormous waterwheels to grind grain. In Syria these mills still function even now. All these installations were constructed mostly under the earlier emperors Hadrian and Trajan. The remains of these admirable constructions are still very much worth a visit.

Marcus Aurelius could enjoy these splendours only partially for against his inclination he was continually drawn into war and strife with the German tribes that threatened to break through the boundaries of his realm in the northern Danube region. He especially had his hands full with the tribes of the Marcomanni and the Quadi which plotted to pour into Italy across the Alps from the region we now know as Chechnya. He was certainly a good general but due to his philosophical inclination much preferred a peaceful life, finding the icy winter campaigns that he had to undertake with his armies quite an ordeal. His personal example was the stoic Epictetus,

Marcus Aurelius and behind him Victoria, goddess of victory, during a triumphal entry into Rome. Bas relief on the triumphal arch for the emperor from the 2nd century



Even if you would jump out of your skin they would still do what they do

who lived from 50 – 130 AD. This philosopher carried his stoic attitude to life to such extremes that he even condoned a master beating a slave to death because he considered the body but a wrapping for the soul. Probably these stoic tenets were not so extreme in the life of Marcus Aurelius but his personal attitude and practical consequences undoubtedly stemmed from this world of pure thought. The emperor had a deep trust in providence and saw the universe as a great natural order with laws that humanity must fathom and accept.

From his letters we glean that he did not always find this easy. He called these letters 'Ta eis heauton' – literally 'to myself' – but later they became known as the 'Meditations' or 'Reflections.' He wrote these letters in his army tent at the Danube, far from his home. He died a natural death at the age of 58 during one of these campaigns – one could say he literally died in his harness – although they did not wear armour in those times or at most had a cuirass or helmet.

His son Commodus who succeeded him was stupid and cruel and wasted no time in creating chaos in his realm where earlier Marcus Aurelius was respected, even by many of the German tribes he defeated. Alas, it is not always true, 'like father, like son.'

A century before his reign the first Christian communities made their influence felt in the Roman realm at the same time that Apollonius of Tyana travelled through the Roman

countries. Paul of Tarsus, Jesus of Nazareth and Apollonius of Tyana were all born more or less in the same period.

J. van Rijckenborgh writes in his elucidation of the *Nuctemeron*, a text attributed to Apollonius, that there were seven great sages at the beginning of our era. Jesus brought his great sacrifice at the age of 33. Paul developed a system of universal Christianity that was acceptable to every Roman citizen. Apollonius of Tyana presented himself as a philosopher of the neo-Pythagorean school of thought.

The birthplaces of the last two sages, Tarsus and Tyana, were both situated in Anatolia, in the southeast of present-day Turkey. Both Paul and Apollonius had their working fields in Ephesus and both also worked in Rome. It is not known if the two wise men knew of each other or if Marcus Aurelius knew of them.

This could well be the case because there are sources that state that the emperor Nero (54–68 AD) ruthlessly persecuted Apollonius and the Christian communities.

It seems probable that Marcus Aurelius was more attracted by the then-popular Mithras cult than by the relatively unknown Christian movement or the waning Pythagoreanism. Because of his birth and education he was first mostly a stoic. It is interesting to note that a century after this emperor-philosopher another emperor, Alexander Severus, placed statues of Apollonius and Jesus, as well as of Orpheus, in his workroom.

HIS PHILOSOPHY The encouraging letters that he wrote to himself (and to himself only) were written in dire circumstances. The letters consist of thought-notations that admonish or put situations into perspective and always stress the necessity of accepting things ‘as they are.’ He had not yet realised the ideal attitude to life that he pursued but he certainly put his whole effort into it.

He was a great soul with a noble character whose shining examples were not only Epictetus and the Greek Stoa but also his own parents and forefathers, whom he described as being of high moral character.

And he wonders: how does one live one’s life with regard to oneself as well as to one’s fellow beings?

‘Neither in writing nor in reading will you be able to lay down rules for others before you shall first have learned to obey the rules yourself. Much more is this so with regard to Life. The art of living is more like wrestling than dancing, in so far as you have to stand ready against the accidental and the unforeseen, and so be not apt to fall.

As doctors have their scalpels and instruments always at hand to meet sudden demands for treatment so do you have to have your life-doctrines ready and in order.

Be ready to recognise the divine as well as the human and do everything, even the very smallest thing, as mindful of the bond which unites the divine and the human for you will not do any act well which concerns man

without referring it to the divine and the same is true with your conduct to God.’

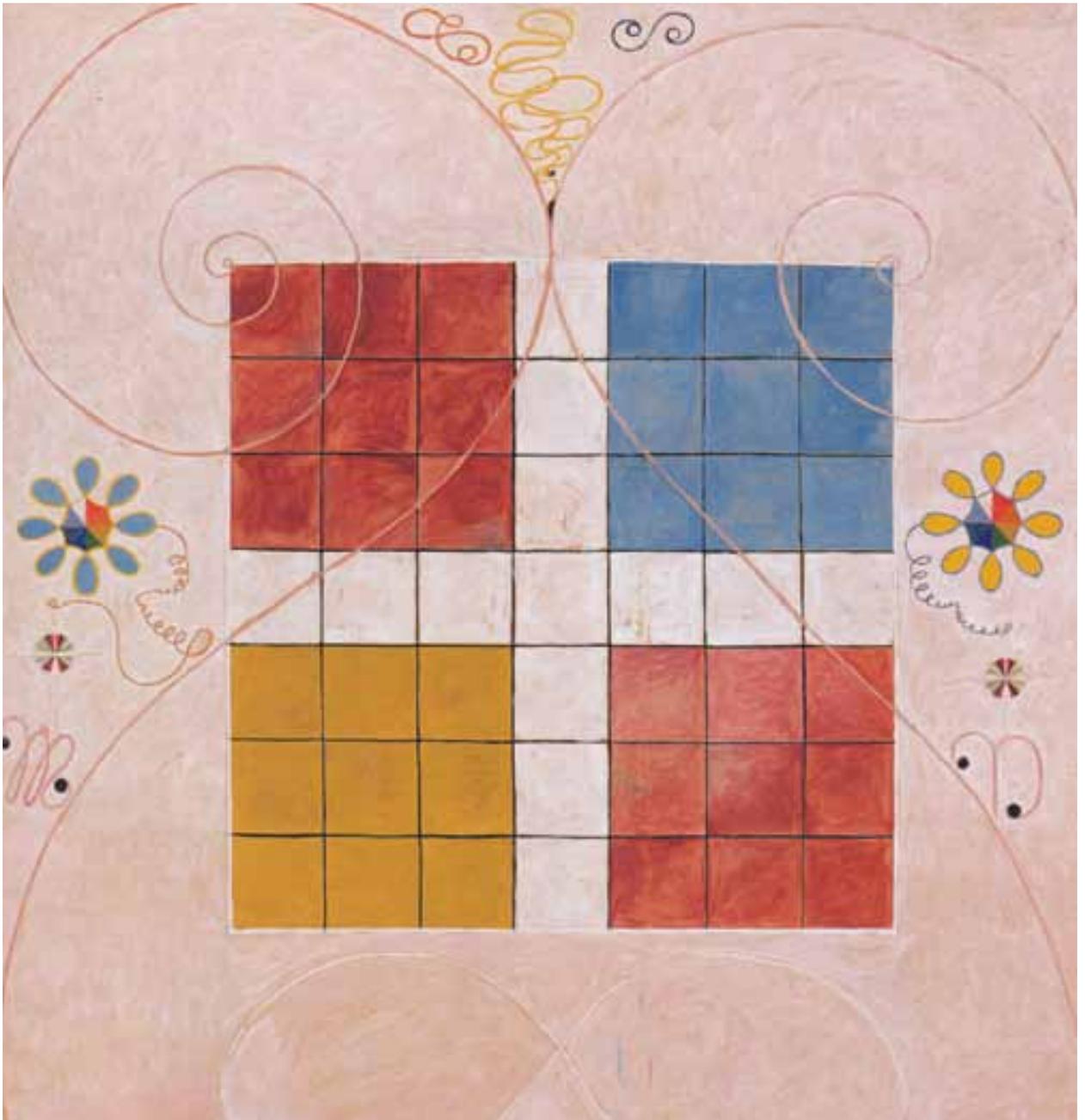
‘Whenever you are annoyed by the impertinence of this or that man, ask yourself at once: would it be possible that in the whole wide universe there would not be impertinent men? Impossible. Well then, do not ask for the impossible for the man who angers you is one of those impertinent people who obviously must exist in the universe. Keep this in mind when you meet a criminal or an otherwise unreliable or sinful human. For once you impress it on your mind that these people clearly must have their reason for existence, you will become milder towards each of them.

Even if you would jump out of your skin they would still do what they do. But there is always the possibility to bring someone who has deviated to insight and understanding for every sinner is but a human who has deviated from the goal and is lost.’

‘Man stands in three relationships. Firstly unto the body that envelops him. Secondly toward the divine cause from whence comes all that befalls him and thirdly toward his fellow men. Therefore the only attitude towards life that remains is: to accept with love and contentment that which fate allots him and not contaminate the ‘divine spirit’ (daemon) which lives inside him.’

We continue his meditations on the transitoriness of everything and the lessons we can learn from this.

‘About fame: observe the thoughts of those



'The Ten Largest' is a series of paintings several metres high which illustrate the manner in which Hilma approached abstract thinking in 1907. She represents the different ages of people in a completely imaginary way. The first canvases 'Childhood' and 'Youth' are multicoloured and luxuriant, full of floral fantasies. The canvases 'Adulthood' exhibit a growing calm and equilibrium. In 'Age' numbers 9 and 10 (above), the series harmoniously attains a high point of symmetry and balance.

The Ten Largest, No. 10, Age. Group IV, 1907

who strive after fame, see what kind of people they are, what they avoid, what they seek. And then reflect how, like sand dunes that are covered by new dunes, so earlier events in our life are covered by later ones.

Time is a river that happens, a raging torrent. For hardly has something come into sight than it is past already and something else comes floating past and this also shall soon pass.'

'He who observes the present has seen everything that has been from the beginning of time and all that shall be in the ever-unfolding future. For all is of the same nature and fabric. Therefore return to your sober self. And when you have woken and have seen that it was only dreams that disquieted you, so consider henceforth also in your waking life the things around you as so many dreams.'

'Are you afraid of change? What can be without it and what is dearer and more suitable to the universal nature? Must not your wood be transformed by flames before your bath can be ready for you? Must not your food be altered to make it fit to nourish you? Indeed, what part of life can go forward without alteration? So, can you not see that you yourself must change and that this transformation is just as necessary for the All-Nature?

Consider how long you have already avoided all this and how many times you have sidestepped the opportunities given you by the gods. Will you finally accept what sort of universe it is of which you are a part and that the architect of this universe is also the originator of your existence? Moreover that the limits of your time have already been ordained and that this time period will dissipate when you do not use it to illuminate your spirit. Yes, the time evaporates and you also, without ever returning.

How soon everything disappears! In the material creation, the bodies; in time, the recollection. A civilised and humble man says to the All-Nature which gives all and takes all: 'Take whatever you want – take what is yours.' But

he does not say so presumptuously but in obedience and in self surrender to her Will.'

'WHAT IS DYING? When seen in a clear light and disconnected from what our fantasies have made it, you will surely acknowledge that dying is but a function of nature. And to fear a working of nature is childish. But dying is not only a function of nature but also has a wholesome outcome.

Finally contemplate how, and with which part of his being, man enters into community with God and especially under which circumstances he is best able to do so.'

Finally Marcus Aurelius comes to the following conclusions:

'You must hasten therefore; not only because you are every day nearer unto death, but also because your true perception and understanding of the true nature of things may fail you before you die. Therefore, do not act as if you have a thousand years still to live. Death hangs over you while you live, so be good as long as it is still in your power.'

'Descend into your inner self – there lies the wellspring of all that is Good – the source that will ever spring up again if you will dig for it. If a man were to stand by a clear pure spring, and curse it, still the spring would never cease sending up potable water; and if he should cast clay into it or filth, it will speedily disperse them and wash them out, and will not be at all polluted.

How then will it be become possible for you to possess a perpetual fountain instead of a mere well? By continually striving for the freedom of the Spirit, enjoined with goodwill, simplicity and modesty.

People seek private retiring places, at the coast or in the mountains and you yourself are wont to desire those places, but nowhere will a man find better peace and harmony than by descending into his own soul.'

We shall end with a letter in which it is shown how clearly he was able to observe



Finally contemplate how, and with which part of his being, man enters into community with God and especially under which circumstances he is best able to do so

himself and from this observation decided – as the divine nature of the universe urged him to do – to disband the inner contradiction that he felt so strongly.

‘This will repress the desire for vain-glory in that you cannot make the whole of your life, from your youth onward, appear as if you were a philosopher. It is known to many, as well as to your own conscience, that you were far from true wisdom. If this be your aim, you must be full of confusion: It can be no easy matter for you to gain the reputation of a philosopher. Nay, the grand purpose of your life is even opposite to this wished-for reputation. Now that you have realised wherein true excellence consists, do away with this affair of reputation and the opinions of others.

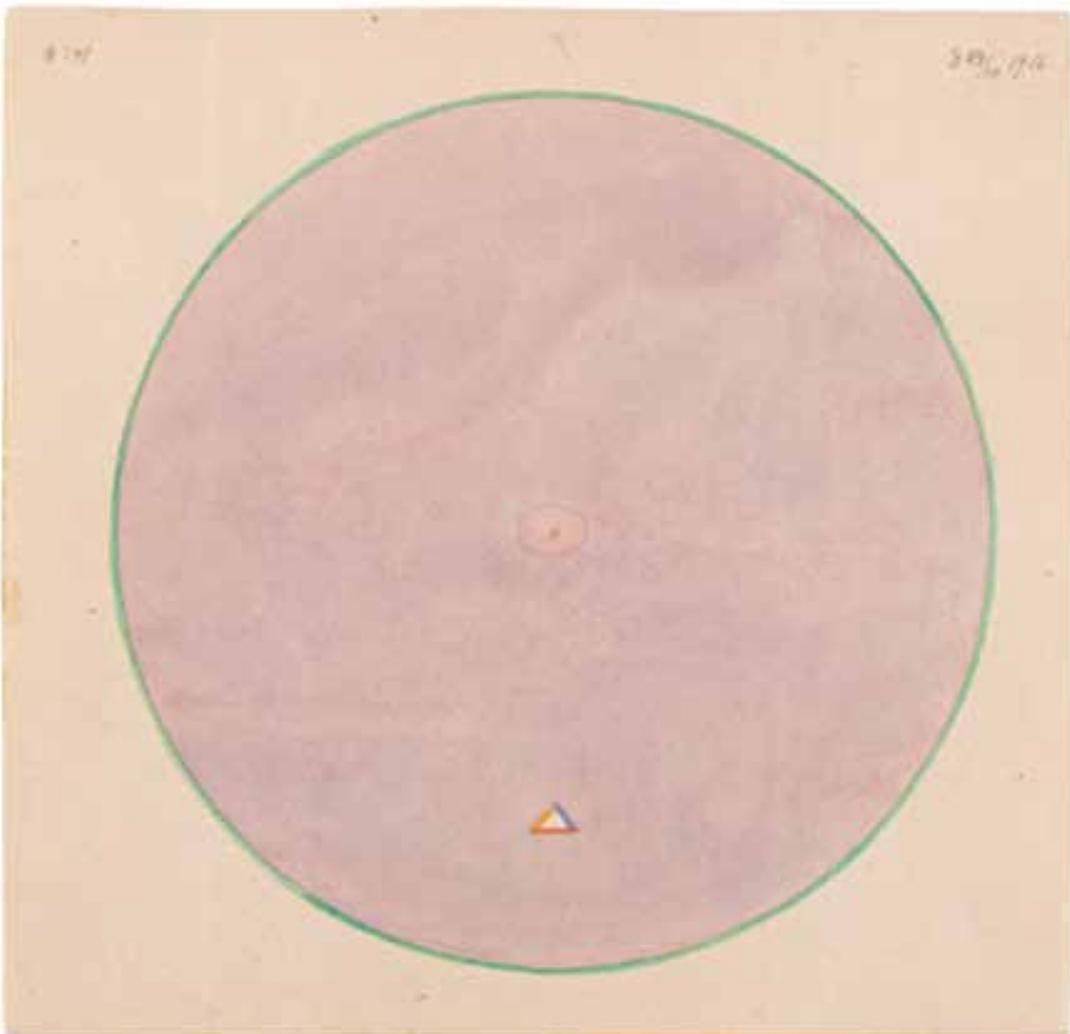
Let it be enough to spend the rest of your life in accordance with your own nature. Study therefore what this demands of you and be solicitous about nothing else, but knowing what your nature requires, and acting accordingly. You have experienced many wanderings, without finding happiness. It is certainly not found in philosophical arguments, nor in riches, nor in fame, nor in sensuality. Nowhere. Where, then, is it to be found? In acting the part which human nature requires. How shall you have to act then? By firmly retaining the great maxims from which our desires and actions flow. What maxims? Those concerning good and evil: ‘that nothing is truly good to a man, which does not make him just, temperate, courageous, and free: and that nothing

can be evil to a man, which gives him not the contrary dispositions.’

‘Acknowledge finally once and for all that you have within you something of a far more exalted and divine nature than the lustful experiences that make you jerk like a puppet. What is there in my mind in this moment? Is it mistrust? Is it greediness or some such movement? Throw away all your erroneous assumptions and images and you are saved. Who would hinder you to do away with them?’

These letters of the emperor-philosopher Marcus Aurelius are still topical and current after nearly 2000 years – even more so seen in the light of the important spiritual turning point with which humanity is confronted in these days. In truth the reader will acknowledge the words: ‘I desire to live according to your wise exemplary standard and so know myself to be connected to the divine plan of creation.’ 🌟

THE MAGICAL WORLD OF HILMA AF KLINT



Of a special, subtle atmosphere are the paintings from the Parcival series: Almost monochromatic, they demonstrate the effect of pure forms like the point, the circle and the triangle (above) in the large circle of eternal being.

The Parcival series no. 41, Group 1, 1916

Nothing can be taken away from life; nothing can be missed from this unity. Art is not an isolated phenomenon, but it is as life itself: beautiful, fresh, new and highly original. In the same way, the dunghill belongs to it. In ancient Egypt, it was a beetle of the dunghill, a cockroach, that generated the sun! However, what stems from the earth, returns to it. What was born in heaven spreads its wings to soar up to it. 'Therefore, dwell on the beauty of life,' Marcus Aurelius says. 'Look at the stars, and see yourself go with them!'