

pentagram

MAN BETWEEN SPIRIT AND NATURE

As living substance, God is one. As life *and* substance, God is two: He-She, Father-Mother. He is life and She is substance. He is spirit; She is eternal substance, nature, primordial substance, spirit *and* nature.

Primordial substance is not the matter of this earth, but cosmic building material, countless times lighter. Spirit is the *magical agent*, which grants life, movement and growth to everything that exists. Every persevering researcher encounters it at a certain moment, in the cosmos as well as in the microcosm, the human being. As above, so below.

In this issue, the Pentagram offers the reader a number of visions on the role of the human being in the eternal interaction between *spirit* and *nature*. It is unique that the human being is able to make them one again in perfect harmony through the soul, the living new soul, a new creature. Thus it is the human being who demonstrates the *threefoldness*: the Son, Christ in us.

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Cover: The Greek goddess Artemis.
Detail of the eastern frieze of the
Parthenon in Athens (Pericles,
440-432 BC).

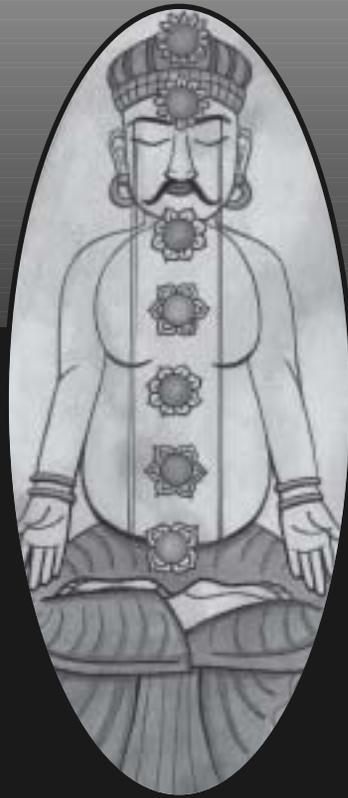
The waters of non-being

Can a manifestation of the spirit be described?

Can it be experienced?

How does the spirit speak to us?

In all times and cultures, people have attempted to approach the spirit, to fathom it and to open their consciousness for its light.



In an ancient Hindu text from the *Matsya Purana* we read: ‘But if only that can be known which the deity has previously revealed, who is then able to know him himself?’¹

Spirit is unknowable. It is therefore not possible for the human mind to fathom it intellectually and mentally. The ancient Hindu masters therefore chose myths or legends to give the faithful an idea of the spirit. Even today, these legends are able to break open our cognitive powers. Their message does not primarily address the mind but the intuition of the heart. This intuition is currently becoming more and more important. The cell consciousness expresses itself through the heart. It thus makes sense that the longing for the origin is a ‘recollection’, which resounds as a kind of call in the heart through the cell consciousness. Many such legends are found in the *Puranas* – Hindu texts which contain, among other things, myths about the origin and the end of the world, and precepts for religious exercises. Nowadays, *Puranas* enjoy equal standing with the *Vedas* and are currently

being translated from Sanskrit into English on behalf of Unesco. Records about the *Puranas* can be traced back to the fourth century BC.²

One of the beautiful myths from the *Matsya Purana* tells of the sage Markandeya, who experiences a manifestation of the highest spirit. We are going to recount this myth in an abridged form here. In order to do so, we draw on secondary sources by prominent Indologists³, as the *Matsya Purana* has only been fragmentarily translated from Sanskrit.

THE MARKANDEYA MYTH

At the end of a world era, a day of Brahma, ‘when society reaches a state in which wealth confers status, possessions become the only source of virtue, passion the only bond between man and woman, deception the foundation for success in life, sexual love the only way to joy and outer confusion is lumped together with inner faith, [...]’, we have arrived in the Kali Yuga, the world of today. ‘Old people would like to be like young ones, youth lacks openness,

left: South-Indian picture of the seven chakras
above: Contemporary picture of Markandeya's birth

teachers, merchants and servants derive joy from mean tricks, the will for what is higher is extinguished, the strongest egocentricity reigns.⁷⁴

Once humanity has been afflicted with this misery, all possibilities for salvation vanish and the universe becomes ripe for dissolution. Vishnu, the highest deity, then sucks the cosmos into his divine substance again. He devours the barren chaos and takes up people, planets, animals and solar systems, plants and universes again. He causes all ensouled beings, from god to stone, to melt, and everything merges into the highest being. Heat and floods alternate. What once nourished now destroys.

- *Vishnu will strike the sun and all beings with blindness.* The earth dries up, divine and earthly water disappear.
- *Vishnu becomes wind* – and takes away the vivifying air from all creatures.

- *Vishnu becomes fire* – and the great fire of the world is ignited.
- *Vishnu becomes clouds* – and a torrential downpour, pure and sweet as milk, extinguishes the fire.

And the worlds dissolve into nirvana. The earth is led back to the sea of the beginning; the elements melt into what is undivided, into what is fluid. Moon and stars disintegrate, and nothing else exists but an unbounded primordial ocean.

Vishnu sleeps – solitary and lonely, he lies as an enormous figure on the substance of the primordial ocean, floating half submerged on the waves, slumbering, without knowing, only himself.

Vishnu dreams – he dreams the universe as it should be. In the deity, the cosmos lies as an unborn child, and the world runs in its harmonious orbits, just as it is supposed to be. In Vishnu's dream, a holy man wanders the ideal earth: a pilgrim who beholds the divine world, filled with joy. The holy man is thousands of years old. His name is Markandeya. He is tall, powerful and

'After having crossed the seven rings of divine existence, he enters the extended and limitless firmament, the unending, and floats through it. This swimming is almost the same as floating, but isn't. It does not cause restraining waves. Now he reaches the tranquil centre, likewise enclosed by something that appears to be the last ring. One cannot go through it, as it is the ultimate frontier of the human possibilities of approaching... Here he is in harmony with his true state.'

(Free after Ram Chandra)

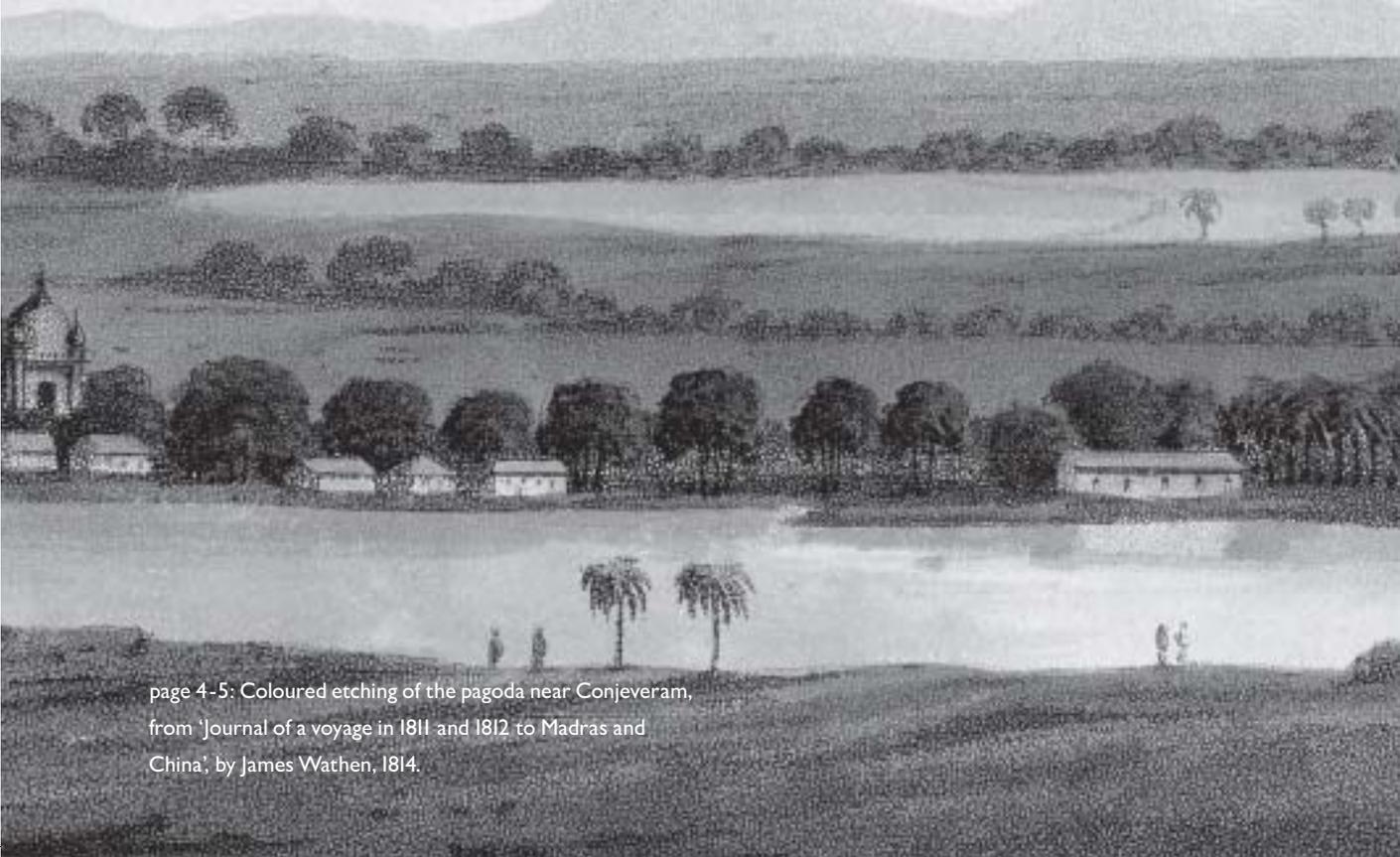
wise. He visits the holy places, wellsprings and sites. He watches the people who love God in their activities. Markandeya is one with this dreamed world in the inner being of the deity.

But then something miraculous occurs: in the enormous silence of the cosmic night, the deity sleeps open-mouthed. During his wanderings, the old man slips and falls from the dreaming god's mouth into the sea.

Initially, Markandeya does not see the sleeping deity at all. He floats on the nocturnal sea and dejectedly wonders: 'Am I dreaming? Am I imagining things? Did I become insane? Where are the sun, the moon and the stars? Extinguished? This world did not deserve that. There is no wind here, where is the earth? Where am I?'

In the ocean, Markandeya fights for his life ever more desperately. Then he notices the mighty body of the sleeping deity. He thinks that it resembles a mountain range rising from the water. 'Yes, now I can see it more clearly; this mountain is glowing from within; a wondrous light!' The holy man swims closer, he wants to take a closer look at the mountain range – but then an enormous hand grabs him and brings him to the mouth and swallows him.

Now the holy man suddenly stands in the familiar landscape of the dream of the deity again and, confused, comes to a halt. 'What was that? Was I dreaming? Was it a vision?' As Markandeya has no other choice, he keeps on walking, watches the yogis and ascetics performing their



page 4-5: Coloured etching of the pagoda near Conjeveram, from 'Journal of a voyage in 1811 and 1812 to Madras and China', by James Wathen, 1814.

‘The sublime swan knows neither cold nor heat, neither pleasure nor pain, neither honour nor dishonour. He has passed beyond the six waves: hunger, thirst, grief, self-deception, loss of powers and death by giving up criticism, pride, jealousy, anger, greed, self-deception, rapture, envy and egoism. He considers his body lifeless because the decline of he body is the cause of doubt and lack of understanding. He who has attained this insight, enters this state. “I am the peace-loving, simple and unchangeable consciousness, the spirit.” Through knowledge of he unity of the self and the supreme self (the spirit), the difference between them ceases to exist. This is the dawn of the true gnosis.’
(Freely after the Paramahamsa Upanishad)

holy exercises, rejoices at the wisdom of the Brahmins, wonders at the art of government of kings, while continuing to wander through the divine dream world. For hundreds of years, he wanders about the world as it should be, which is dreamt by the highest deity.

But one day, he slips out of the mouth of the deity into the pitch-black sea again. In this terrible, silent expanse, he floats around and suddenly sees an island. There, under a fig tree, a child is sleeping. And what a child it is! It radiates from within. In his astonishment, Markandeya forgets to swim and nearly drowns in the black waves. When he begins to swim again and looks towards the island, the radiant child plays in quite a free and uninhibited way, surrounded

by this frightening, endless expanse and space. A superterrestrial glow emanates from the child.

Shyly, the old man watches it, treading water: ‘Did I not see something like this before... but where... how long ago?’ Suddenly, Markandeya becomes aware of the immeasurable depth of the ocean under him. Panic is about to seize him, but at that moment, he hears a voice, rumbling like a distant thunder. ‘Welcome Markandeya!’ It is the child who is speaking to him. ‘Welcome, Markandeya. Fear not, my child, come closer!’

For as long as he had lived, no one had ever spoken to him like this. Imagine being immediately addressed by one’s Christian name – how disrespectful!



Markandeya Rishi was, we are told, one of the very ancient sages and the only one who survived at the end of the previous 'day of Brahma', when the whole universe declined into non-being. Of Markandeya it is said that he studied the Vedas and diligently observed their precepts. He was a good person and remained celibate for all his life. The rishi served the supreme godhead for countless millions of years and thus overcame death, which for others was invincible. He is credited with saying: 'Man is the author of his own fate. We observe that the deeds of previous lives produce their fruits in our current existence. The soul is reborn, burdened with the amassed karma. Through virtue and pure deeds, it can attain the heavenly state. Through deeds of good and evil, it remains human. [...] We are therefore held to do what is virtuous and reject what is unjust.' In the Markandeya Purana, the part of the Mahabarata attributed to Rishi Markandeya, we read that the goddess Chandi (strength and power) destroyed the two demons Shumba (pride) and Nieshumba (shame). Chandi pervades the cosmos and maintains and protects dharma, the cosmic order. With her 'strength and power', she kills the negative aspects of denial and immoderation and restores the equilibrium necessary to be able to strive for perfection. She pervades the cosmos. She creates, maintains and destroys when it is time. When the cosmic proportions are threatened, she manifests herself in various guises in order to protect the world.



left: Modern Indian woodcarving of Markandeya's salvation by Shiva. Right: A Rajput head's visit to a hermit, from the 'Madhandeya Purana', Guler Pajari School, 1756. Gouache and ink on paper, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK.

Once again, Markandeya forgets to swim. Even as he is drowning, he asks in his indignation: 'Who is speaking so disrespectfully to me? Who presumes to address me on a first-name basis, while I am more than a thousand years old! I am not used to such treatment. Even the highest gods respect me and call me 'the long-lived one'. Who risks his life by thus calling me? Who is throwing his life away? Who is asking to die?'

The divine boy remains utterly calm. 'Child, I am your father, grandfather, great-grandfather, the primordial beginning, which guides all of life. Come to me. I knew your father well. In times long gone, I granted him a son with inexhaustible life power. Your father knew the secret heart of existence and it is from this heart that you stem. This is why you are allowed to behold me, resting on the great ocean and playing like a child under this tree.'

हेतुश्चागमनेवकः १६ सशोकश्चकस्मात्तुर्मनाइवत्वस्यसे इत्याकार्यवचस्तस्यभ्रपतेःप्रणयो
दितं ७ प्रत्युवाचसतंवेश्यः प्रश्रयावनतोन्प वैश्यउ
वाच समाधिर्नामवेश्यो हसुत्यत्रोधनिनांकुले १८
पुत्रैदीरैर्निरस्तश्चधनलोभाद् साधुभिः विहीनश्चधनेदीरैःपु
त्रैरादायिमेधनं १९ वनमभ्या गतोदुःखीनिरस्तश्चाप्तवंधुभिः
सोहंनवेमिपुत्राणांकुशलाकु शलाभिकां २० प्रयतिस्वजना
नांचदाराणांवाचसंस्थितः किं तुतेयां गृहेक्षेममक्षेमंकिंतुसां
षतं २१ कथंतेकिंतुसहृता दुर्वृत्ताकिंतुमेसुताः राजोवा
च येर्निरस्तोभवांलुथैःपुत्रदारादिभिर्दुनैः तेषुकिंभवतःस्नेहमनुवधातिमानसं वैश्यउ
एवमेतद्यथाशाहभवानस्मिन्तंभवः किंकरोमिनवधातिममनिकुरतांमनः यैःसंत्यज्यपितृस्नेहंधन



Then Markandeya's eyes opened like blossoms opening. It seemed as if he wanted to make a bow while swimming. 'Lord of the universe, by which name are you called?'

'I am the beginning, the first being, the source of the universe. I am the holy fire, the cycle of the years, the juggler of the world, the magician who develops wonderful tricks. The unfolding of the universe is my creation. I am the end, the maelstrom, the destructive turbulence that again sucks up everything that was ever unfolded. My name is: "Death of the Universe".'

The child continued: 'I am the holy order, the light of heaven, the wind and the earth, the space spreading in all directions. I am the essence of the primordial beginning and the highest refuge. From me, all that ever was, is and will be, originated. Whatever you perceive in the universe, I dwell in it. I teach you the goals of human life, which are: the satisfaction of the senses, the proper efforts for affluence and the fulfilment of the holy duties, and I show you these three as befitting the earthly life. Keep wandering happily through the universe in my body. The gods are living there as

do the holy seers.'

With a swift movement, the being of the primordial beginning whisked the holy man back into his mouth and again swallowed him.

This time, Markandeya's heart was filled with bliss and harmony. He stopped wandering and sought a sheltered and secret place. There he remained in silence and listened to the song of the immortal wild goose with its almost inaudible, yet all-penetrating melody of the inhaled and exhaled breath of life. And Markandeya heard the breath of the deity: 'Many forms do I assume... and... when the sun and the stars will have vanished, I drift and swim in slow motion on the unbounded expanse of water... I am the lord... I bring forth the universe from myself and dwell in the cycle of the ages, until it dissolves through me.'

In the Indian tradition, Vishnu is the preserver of the universe. 'He is regarded as the deity who called the worlds with all their creatures to life through emanation, and then sustains life for a certain period until the universe is dissolved again.'

This god reveals himself to Markandeya in a

very special way. First, the sage wanders in the dream of the deity. He is in the spirit, but still in a sleep-like state, and not yet conscious of himself. He is completely taken up into the dream of the deity, he is familiar with him and thus walks his path in the right way. However, this cannot remain so. The mouth is the symbol of the creative organ of the deity, who speaks and 'it is'. In the legend, Markandeya falls from the mouth of Vishnu into the great water, the sea of primordial matter.

THE PATH TO CONSCIOUSNESS

Markandeya, the virgin but unconscious human being, thus becomes the creature who must be embodied in matter in order to attain consciousness there. From the original state of being in the unmanifested spirit (Vishnu's dream), he is spat out, so to speak, into the ocean of spiritual 'non-being'. Through this first experience, also his as yet latent consciousness is stimulated. Confusion and fear seize the sage and he desperately struggles in the black water. He feels the separation from the deity and experiences the cosmic sea as a threat. Although he approaches the deity, he only perceives him merely as an enormous, overwhelming mountain. Without the right insight, he is again devoured by Vishnu and becomes the dream image of the deity again. But through this first experience in the ocean of primordial matter, the seed of his later self-awareness has been laid and the possibility of pre-memory created.

THE RADIANT CHILD

When, after aeons, Markandeya falls from the mouth of the god once again, he no longer thrashes about, but is now able to swim. The sight of the radiant, divine boy triggers in him a memory of the light of the spirit. Not until this second, divine contact can Markandeya comprehend the situation. In that moment, he also becomes aware of the depth of the primordial ocean. He becomes aware of himself! When the radiant child addresses him, he becomes angry,

for he considers himself very far advanced, while the child addresses him as an equal! But he listens and suddenly his inner eyes are opened. Markandeya is now directly addressed by Vishnu, the spirit of the All, who reveals himself to him in the figure of the divine child. Only now is Markandeya ripe for 'the word', the manifestation of the spirit. And he falls silent.

'The whole moving world moves within me who never moves. At the end of a world cycle, creation dissolves into my primordial matter. Then nature rests.'⁷

Once again, Markandeya enters the divine world. In the dream of the deity, he stays, silently, in a secret and sheltered place in the world as it should be. There, at the very end, he hears the call of the wild goose, the breath of everything that is. Now Markandeya has developed to the extent that he continuously hears this call. With many peoples, the wild goose (and also the swan) are symbols of the spirit inhabiting and penetrating all worlds. This is also true for the sage who has become conscious. Because Markandeya hears this call consciously and senses the breath of everything that is, and becomes aware of his self and of the spirit, he truly enters Vishnu.

'Those enter him, whose sins have been shaken off through insight; and after having entered him, they are not created again.'⁸

NOTES

¹ A. Hohenberger: *Die indische Flutsage und das Matyapurana, ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Vishnuverehrung* (The Indian myth about the Flood and the Matsya Purana, a contribution to the history of the Vishnu worship). Harrasowitz, Leipzig, 1930, p.116.

² Ibid

³ Heinrich Zimmer: *Indische Mythen und Symbole* (Indian Myths and Symbols). 5th Edition, Munich 1993.

⁴ Ibid *Vishnu Purana*; ed. and transl. from Sanskrit by Horace Hayman Wilson. John Murray, London, 1840, pp. 20 ff and p. 43. Reprint Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1972. Also to be found on: www.sacred-texts.com/hin/vp/index.htm

Veda literally means 'divine knowledge'. There are four Vedas in Hindu literature: the Rig Veda, the Ayur Veda, the Sâma Veda and the Atharva Veda. There is an outer and an inner part. The former is called *karma kanda* or the 'part of the works' and the latter *inana-kanda* or the 'part of wisdom'. The Vedas are not attributed to a single author. For almost any hymn or parts of them, another author or various authors are mentioned, but it is assumed that they are collected and classified in their current form by Vedavyasa, purportedly the son of a rishi. The origin of the Vedas goes back to distant antiquity, millennia before the beginning of western civilisation. The Hindu pandits (or scholars) maintain that the Vedas were orally transmitted for thousands of years until Vedavyasa finally combined them into a whole on the shores of holy Lake Manasarovara beyond the Himalayas in a region which today belongs to Tibet.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ E. Schleberger: *Die indische Götterwelt* (The Indian world of the Gods), Munich, 1986.

⁷ Theodor Springman, *Bhagavad-gita; der Gesang des Erhabenen*. 9. (Bhagavad Gita; the Song of the Sublime Ones), Aufl. Schwab, Gelnhausen, 1962, p. 67.

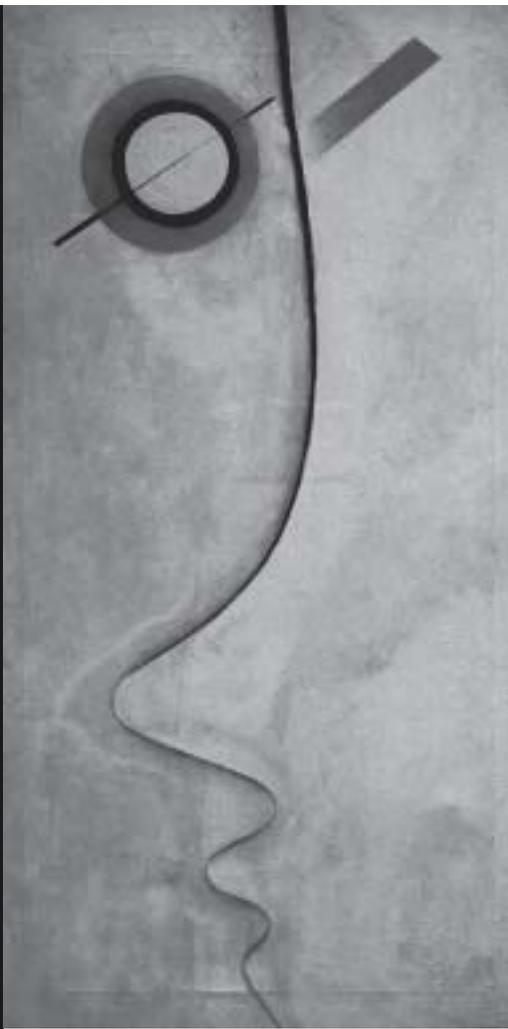
⁸ A. Hohenberger: *Die indische Flutsage und das Matyapurana, ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Vishnuverehrung* (The Indian myth about the Flood and the Matsya Purana, a contribution to the history of the Vishnu worship). Harrasowitz, Leipzig, 1930, p.117.

The texts in the first two shaded boxes were taken from Georg Feuerstein, *Teachings of yoga*. Shambhalla Publications, Boston, USA, 1997.



Krishna dancing on the serpent Kaliya, which he had defeated. Nineteenth-century bronze sculpture, India.

The boy with the scar



'In ancient times, there was no war. Peace ruled among all tribes. Once upon a time there was a man who had a very beautiful daughter.'

This is the beginning of a fairytale of the Siksika, Blackfoot Indians from Montana (USA) and Alberta (Canada). The best and strongest young men from her village wanted to marry her, but the girl rejected all proposals. However, when her parents wanted to marry her off, she took them into her confidence and told them her secret:

'Now you must hear the truth. The sun has spoken to me: do not marry any of these men, because you belong to me. If you entrust yourself to me, you will live long and always be happy.'

A shy, poor boy with an ugly scar in

his face was continuously teased by his peers from the village. They mocked him and challenged him to ask for the girl's hand. He finally does so, without any hope of success. He is amazed when the girl does not immediately reject him, but says: 'Go to the sun spirit. Tell him that you want to marry me. Tell him to let the scar in your face disappear. That will be the sign that he agrees.'

There is a relationship between the sun spirit, the pure girl and the boy with the scar in his face. It is important that spirit, soul and body become one in a new life; the human being should, if he is to win the treasure, only follow the voice of the soul and enter the path to the spirit.

There are many symbols in the story which, each in its own way, shed light on the human development.

Not too cheerfully, the boy set out on the difficult path, for which he must give up his life as it was until now. He asked the wolf, the bear and the badger, but only the sloth was able to show him the way to the shore of the great sea that he had to cross. Totally exhausted, he reached the sea at the end of this world.

'The water seemed to have no end. His provisions were finished and his moccasins were worn. His heart was sick. "I cannot cross the great water," he said, "and I don't have the strength to return to my people. I will die here on this shore".'

But this is not what happened. The story relates how help arrived 'from the other side', in the powerful symbol of two swans who are swimming in the

top left: Vladimir Stenberg, colour composition no. 4, oil on cloth, 1920.

right: Pavel Kusnezov, Red Grapes, oil on cloth, 1930-1931. Kusnezov was chairman of the Society of the Four Arts, which was founded in Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1925.

water and approach him. When they reached him, the swans took him up, and carried by them, he was taken to the other shore across the seemingly endless water.

Not the courageous wolf, the strong bear or the crafty badger, but the sloth helped him. The animal that sleeps for fourteen hours a day and spends the rest of the time hanging virtually motionless on a branch; the animal that never attacks and is never aggressive, is for the Indians a symbol of peace.

In this story, the sloth symbolises the state that is necessary to reach the other shore: the notion that the individual human being, isolated from the spiritual power of the light, is unable to cross the fundamental chasm, the sea.

Only the human being, who is silent and balanced in word and deed, can be helped.

The description of what happened on the other shore is very striking.

First, the boy with the scar in his face sees a beautiful armour lying on the side of the road, which he does not touch, however. It is the property of Morning Star, the youngest son of the sun spirit, who trusts him and takes him along to his parents, to the sun spirit and his mother, who is called the 'red light of the night'. The next day, Morning Star is so thoughtless as to attack the dangerous birds of death. They are living near the great water and already killed his brothers, the sons of the sun spirit, and his mother. The boy with the scar sees the danger and with his spear, he kills the birds. After this heroic deed, he is

granted permission to marry the girl.

'Go home now,' the sun spirit says. 'Listen to me. Be brave. Listen to me. I am the only chief. Everything belongs to me and received its breath of life from me. I created the earth, the mountains, the prairies, the rivers and forests. I created men and all animals.'

As a sign for the girl, the sun spirit cures the scar and also teaches the boy to build a medicine hut. Laden with many presents, he returns to his village via the galaxy and is recognised and cheerfully received by his fellow villagers, even if he is wearing strange clothing and the scar disappeared from his face.

He marries the girl and, linked with the energy of the sun spirit, they build the first medicine hut on earth.

At the end of the story, the message is given that the new human being, who is one with the Great Breath, the spirit, is now also able to help others. He builds a hut of healing, a field of serene energy, in which all who have gained insight and are consciously longing for the helping power, may find purification and healing.

Chidr, the green one

Man's encounter with the spirit

When a mortal human being attunes his life to the reawakening of the divine element within him, a new consciousness, in which he is one with the divine spirit, certainly develops once the time of preparation has ended. The inner teachings of Islam link this joyful experience with the figure of Chidr.



In the story by the philosopher Suhrawardi (1155-1191)¹, the sage says to the seeking soul, when it asks how it could undo the 'chain mail of matter', the bond to perishable nature: 'Become like Chidr.'

The soul experiences that discarding this iron armour does not occur painlessly. Upset, it asks:

'Master, what can I do so that this agony becomes lighter?'

'Go to the source of life. Pour water from this source over your head, until the chain mail [the gross-material body] becomes flexible. This water causes the rings of the chain mail to become very subtle, and when they are subtle [the body has become etheric], the blow of the sword is easy to endure.'

'Master, where is the source of life?'

'In dark places. When you long for it, put on the proper shoes, as Chidr did, and enter the path of hope until you reach the dark places.'

'Where does the path begin?'

'At any point. When you truly walk the path, you will walk it to the very end.'

'What characteristics do the dark places have?'

'Darkness. You are in the darkness and you do not know it. He who walks this path understands, when he perceives the darkness within himself, that he was already in the darkness before and never saw the light.'

This is the first step for the pilgrim. From this point, it is possible to go on. When someone has reached this stage, he is able to continue.

'He who longs for the source of life, will often desperately wander about in the darkness. If he is worthy of the source, he will eventually see the light after the darkness.'²

He who finds the source of life and bathes in it, will become like Chidr.'³

Suhrawardi mentions this mysterious figure, who is in Islamic tradition closely linked with the source of life, in one small sentence only. Chidr was and is generally known, both in orthodox Islam⁴ and in Sufism. The interpretations range from miracle healer to the highest spiritual ones, while in the Islamic world, people worship him in numerous sanctuaries as a bringer of good luck.

THE ENCOUNTER WITH CHIDR

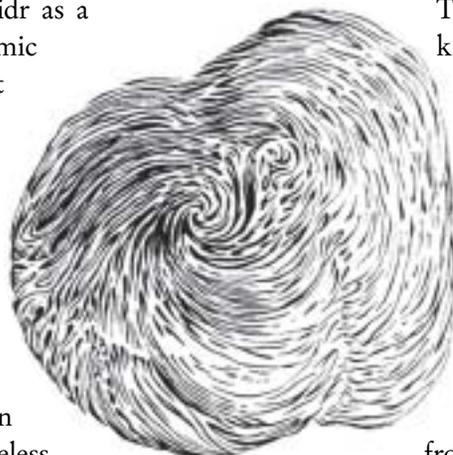
Encounters with Chidr are described in many Sufi writings. It is always a profound experience, which changes the life of the person concerned. This encounter often leads to a rigorous aversion for all matters of this world. However, there are also Sufis, who consider it an essential experience, without having to change much in their outer lives. Many see Chidr as a brother; others experience him as their spiritual father. To some Sufis, Chidr is personified by a human being who becomes their personal leader.

We may also see Chidr as a spiritual, microcosmic being, as an inner Spirit human being, in whom the flame of the new consciousness is kindled. On a cosmic level, he is the spiritual leader of humanity. In his role as inner leader, Chidr is identified with the nameless servant of God, who accompanies Moses through three temptations, described in the Koran. The nameless servant who possesses the divine knowledge, warns him: 'You are not capable of keeping up with me. How can you endure something of which you have no knowledge?'⁵

He takes Moses along under the condition that he does not ask questions about his actions. Of course, three incidents occur when Moses finds his leader's behaviour so wrong and objectionable that he cannot keep his agreement and therefore asks questions. Moses, the man of the law, is unable to interpret the three events; he lacks inner comprehension. He interprets them on the basis of his own morals and the conventional criteria of his

logical mind, and fails. These events, related in the Koran, lead in the Sufi tradition to a differentiation between 'chidric' and 'mosaic' knowledge. Moses is the 'imam of the people of the external [world]', while Chidr possesses true knowledge – Gnosis (in Arabic 'ma'rifa'). He is the 'lord of mystery'. 'Know that Chidr is the reflection of the hidden name of God, and that his place is the abode of the Spirit,' the Persian Sufi Abd ar-Razzaq explains.⁶

CHIDR AND KNOWLEDGE



The special knowledge, the divine knowledge, embodied by Chidr, is called 'ladunic knowledge' in Sufism, because it is described as 'knowledge with God' or 'in the presence of God' (Arabic 'ladun') in sura eighteen.

The famous 'greatest master', Ibn al-Arabi, explains in a letter what this concerns: 'Know, o brother, that seen from the perspective of knowledge, humanity can only achieve perfection when his knowledge stems directly from God, without the intervention of tradition or a sheikh. He who spends his life acquiring knowledge of traditional matters and their details, will be denied the joy of God. For in the sciences connected with traditional matters, the human being spends his life without encountering this truth. And if you, o brother, had entered the path at the hand of a sheikh of the divine people, he would have allowed you to achieve the beholding of God, and on your path, you would have learned from Him (from God) the knowledge of things through healthy inspiration, just as Chidr has taught, without trouble, effort and insomnia.'⁷

CHIDR AND ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Chidr is not always the leader, but often also an example for the seeking human being. Throughout time, Islamic authors associated him with various ancient traditions in order to describe his development as an immortal servant of God. We know from the traditions of late antiquity in Greek, Hebrew and Syrian a widely known myth concerning Alexander the Great, seeking the source of life. In the tenth century, for example, the Shiite theologian Ibn Baboye says about him:

‘Once someone described to him the source of life and told him that he who has drunk from it will not die until he hears the call (on the day of resurrection). Thereupon, Alexander set out to seek this source, and ultimately arrived at a place with three hundred and sixty wells. Chidr commanded his vanguard and Alexander was the favourite of all people. He gave Chidr and each of his companions a salted fish, and said: “Each of you must wash his fish in the well of his choice.” Chidr went to one of the wells, and when he submerged the fish in the water, it became alive and slipped away. When Chidr saw this, he knew that he had reached the water of life [...].’⁸

Later Sufi authors referred to the source of life as the source of insight. It can be found ‘in your abode, though hidden.’⁹ The author Ali al-Qari indirectly linked knowledge with the light: ‘It is said: The water of life alludes to knowledge, and darkness refers to ignorance.’¹⁰ Just as with Suhrawardi, the source of life, guarded by ‘Chidr, the time’ can be found in the darkness, and he who bathes in it or drinks from it, raises himself into the eternal light.

CHIDR, THE GREEN ONE

The close relationship of Chidr to the source of life is also explained by his name, which means ‘the green one’ in Arabic. Again and again, it is said that the earth, the land and

the flowers blossom forth when they are touched by Chidr. Because generally speaking, the colour green plays an important role in Islam, and in Sufism in particular, the explanations also have a more profound meaning. In some Sufi writings, the different states of consciousness and also the development of the inner being are linked to colours. This concerns a link between the Sufi teachings and alchemy, like for example with the 12th-century Persian author Nadjim ad-Din al Kubra, who goes back to the Kubrawaiya Order, which no longer exists, ‘Our method is that of alchemy,’ the Sheikh clearly states at the beginning of his work *Delicious fragrances of kindness and manifestations of exaltedness*.¹¹ He says about the colour green that ‘it is the colour of the heart’s life power.’

‘The colour green is the last colour to fade. From this colour, radiations emanate that sparkle in scintillating brilliance and glittering shine. This colour green can be absolutely pure; it is also possible that it becomes turbid. Its purity announces the rule of the divine light, its turbidity is caused by a return to the darkness of nature.’¹²

The Persian Simnani stated in the fourteenth century that the human being possesses seven subtle organs (he referred to the energy centres, known as the chakras), and gives each of them a name of the prophet. This enabled a profound interpretation of the Koran. This does not concern historic persons, but they are rather symbolic references to a development of the soul. The seventh subtle organ (latifa) is ‘the Mohammad of your being.’¹³ A new organism develops in the human being through these seven inner power centres and the stages of this development are recognised through various coloured lights that envelope these subtle organs. Green is the colour of the seventh organ. In these symbols, Chidr, ‘the green one’, is linked with the genesis of a new soul body. Only in a soul body that is sufficiently subtle, the Spirit can manifest itself and unite with the soul.

CHIDR IN THE WEST

Legends and poems that mention Chidr are so numerous and were spread so widely throughout the centuries that it did not take long for them to reach the West. Goethe was certainly not the first Western author who referred to him, when he wrote in his West-East-Divan:

‘North and West and South are splintered,
thrones burst, kingdoms tremble,

flee to the East that’s pure
to smell the patriarchal air,
with loving, drinking and singing
and Chidr’s (inner) wellspring will make you young.’
The author Gustav Meyrink used the figure of Chidr in his novel *The Green Face*. To him, it concerned the mysterious ‘Chider Green’, with which Meyrink refers to the original meaning of the Arabic word Chidr, ‘the green one’.

CHIDR AND THE KINGDOM IN THE NORTH

In a work on cosmology by Abd al-Karim al-Dschili (deceased in 1428), Chidr is described as a spiritual being in the coherent universe. 'According to his cosmological system, there is a total of seven celestial spheres in the universe and seven earths, which are ordered concentrically around each other. The highest of the seven earths is the earth of the soul. God created it whiter than milk and sweeter than musk, but when Adam entered it after the Fall, it turned into the colour of dust. Only a region in the far north, which was never entered by a sinner, is still as white as God created it. This region is the abode of the "men from the hidden world", whose king is Chidr.'¹⁴

All the examples mentioned here show that the path to Chidr's Kingdom begins in the darkness of the material world, at the source of life where Spirit and nature touch. The water of life grants insight, divine knowledge. The old human being is taken up into this knowledge, and with a new consciousness he has 'become like Chidr.' He is now an inhabitant of the world of the light, but still linked with the darkness in order to show the way to all who are still seeking until they, too, inwardly experience the encounter with Chidr.

left: Idyllic garden (paradise) from a 15th-century French manuscript

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- ¹ Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi, *De red mind*.
- ² Ibid
- ³ The name is also spelled as Khidr, Kheder. Chadir, Chadr, Chezr, Kherz, etc.
- ⁴ Koran, sura 18, verses 65-82
- ⁵ Patrick Franke, *Begegnung mit Khidr: Quellenstudien zum Imaginären im traditionellen Islam* (Encounter with Chidr. Study of the sources of the imaginary in traditional Islam). Franz Steiner Verlag, Beirut-Stuttgart, 2000, p.210. (Beiruter Texte und Studien, Bd. 82).
- ⁶ Ibid, p.200.
- ⁷ Ibid
- ⁸ Muhammed ibn Ali ibn Baboye (deceased 991)
- ⁹ Patrick Franke, *Begegnung mit Khidr: Quellenstudien zum Imaginären im traditionellen Islam* (Encounter with Chidr. Study of the sources of the imaginary in traditional Islam). Franz Steiner Verlag, Beirut-Stuttgart, 2000, p.220 (Beiruter Texte und Studien, Bd. 82).
- ¹⁰ Ibid, p.221, footnote 178.
- ¹¹ F. Meier: *Die Fawa'ih al-djama'at wa fawatih al-djalal des Najm ad-din Kubra* (A record of mystical experiences in Islam from the time around 1200 AD). Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1957.
- ¹² Henry Corbin, *Die smaragdene Vision: Der Licht-Mensch im persischen Sufismus* (The emerald vision: The light human being in Persian Sufism). Eugen Diederichs Verlag, Munich, 1989, p.110.
- ¹³ Ibid, p.106.
- ¹⁴ Patrick Franke, *Begegnung mit Khidr: Quellenstudien zum Imaginären im traditionellen Islam* (Encounter with Chidr. Study of the sources of the imaginary in traditional Islam). Franz Steiner Verlag, Beirut-Stuttgart, 2000, p.207. (Beiruter Texte und Studien, Bd. 82) [In the original text: Abd Al-Karim al-Dschili is sometimes transcribed as al-Dili or al-Deeli). *Al Insan al-kamil*, chapter 62].
- ¹⁵ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Gedichte; West-östlicher Divan* (Poems; West-East Divan). Reclam, Ditzingen, 1999. (Reclam Universal Bibliothek, Nr. 6785). Poem 'Hegire'.

The dream of immortality...

A perfect merge of the human spirit and genetically engineered (nano)robots is approaching. At least, if we have to believe the latest research which is trying to create a 'neural machine' by combining microchips and biology. 'In about thirty years, it should be possible to scan an entire brain with a neural machine,' scientist Ray Kurzweil says.

By that time, it may be hard to distinguish between man and machine: computers will show human features, have emotions and formulate goals. This is to be achieved by transferring the electrons of nucleic acids respectively the printing of the structure of thinking patterns onto silicon chips.

Will humanity be the first species on this planet to be replaced by its own inventions?

'Machines will convince us that they possess consciousness. We will have to agree with them because otherwise their electronic brain would turn insane,' Kurzweil says. 'The evolution of intelligence will be a matter of uploading and

THE JOYFUL WAY BACK

The beginning of a totally different way of dematerialisation is the purification of the heart. But what is a heart? Which processes take place in it? Are they passive processes, led by impulses focused on trivial matters? Or is it a whole process of becoming conscious, through which we learn to understand that the highest principle within us is standing in one great chain of life, linked with all who share that same life?

The human being is barely aware of the wealth slumbering within him. A new way of looking develops when we know that we share

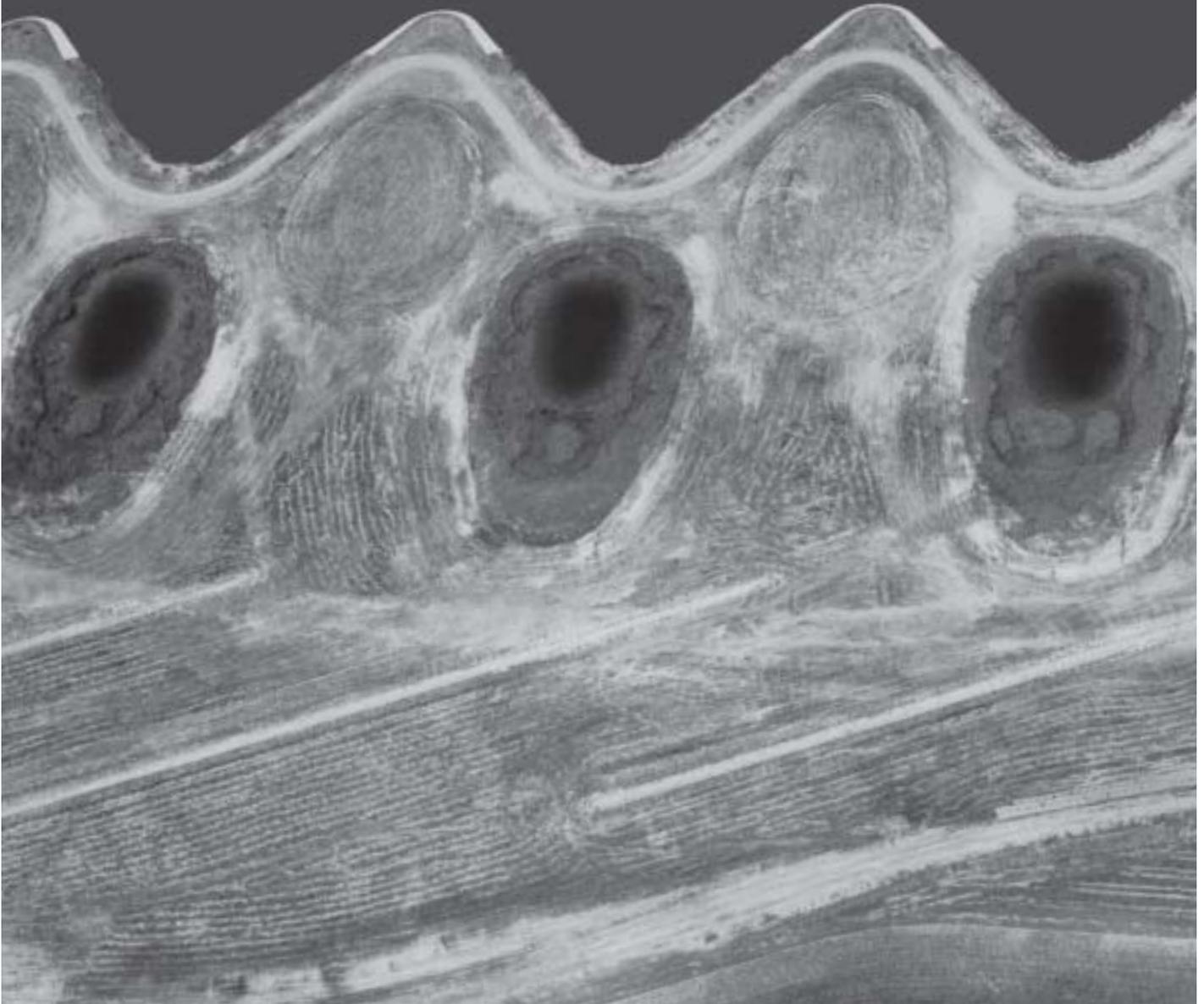
The human being is barely aware of the wealth slumbering within him

downloading. Intelligent computers will not be the adversaries of man; they will not let him disappear but will merge with him.'

With the beginning Age of Aquarius, it seems as if both man *and* nature have indeed entered a mighty process from materialisation to dematerialisation. The consciousness sees tremendous new possibilities dawning on the horizon; it already sees itself completely free from its ties to the matter of this world. Dematerialisation: floating away in digital freedom?

our life with our neighbour, whoever he may be. Our perception becomes deeper: we learn to understand the human striving; we also learn to perceive the source of our fellow human's passion, and we learn to comprehend the suffering that is linked with everyone's existence. And the expansion of the heart's sphere of action – for that is what happens – produces a new thinking faculty that is unable 'to think' *against* life. This will be a very solid foundation for a new activity of the will, for our actions!

Aerial photograph of beach and water. Karel Tomeš.



This path, seen as a development of the pure impulse from the heart, is a path of experience and of becoming conscious. Experience teaches us our place in our immediate environment and our role in society. Experience produces self-knowledge and teaches how to overcome ourselves. First, a human being learns to see how little he can do and thus he becomes truly humble in a natural way, until the moment that he understands that overcoming himself is above all self-surrender. This may seem simple

and easy, but is at the same time very difficult and subtle. Through self-surrender, a new faculty is activated, which is one with the human being and cannot be separated from him. From then on, he knows how much he *can* do. Linked with the chain, and with new and well-founded enthusiasm, he develops a great active power.

This means at the same time a reversal of the hermetic axiom or point of departure 'as above, so below', because the consequences of his puri-



fied deeds make themselves felt in the great whole: in the cosmos, the macrocosm and the whole universe.

What we have sketched in a few words is the path of humanity. It is the safest human development imaginable, and this is truly very joyful. For when effort and function coincide, there is unity of heart, head and action. Just as a child enjoys mastering a new skill, in the same way, a human being, having the new aspects of the consciousness of heart and head at his disposal, experiences the deepest possible feeling of well-being, which is rest and elation at the same time: a well-being that includes perfect health, having become whole and healed.

This is what the spiritual centre in the human being, the rose of the heart, seeks: perfect development that encompasses the whole human being. In this context, a spiritual school is an enormous inspiration and help, in which every

member daily attempts to make a step in this direction.

NEGATIVE DEMATERIALISATION

However, we must remain realistic. A human being cannot always react positively to all impulses coinciding with the release of Aquarian energy, because he often does not recognise this development that contains his destiny. The pitfall is that he may want to immortalise aspects of his mortal personality or that he wants his mortal I to continue living forever, with an artificially living physical body. These are ideas that almost inevitably lead to errors and a wrong use of the possibilities that Aquarius brings closer.

We can see the expanding virtual reality as results of the activity of Aquarius, which are perceived in the life and working fields of western

societies. Many communication processes, which used to take place through personal contacts or were manifested in writing, are now dealt with electronically. This is a typical aspect of the activity of the Aquarian vibrations. Children and young people in particular are nowadays automatically growing up with the virtual world. As you can also have too much of a good thing, a considerable percentage incurs mental damage.

By connecting micro- and nanotechnology¹ with medical science, also a new virtual technology is created. Nowadays, it is possible to plant microchips in the brain, the heart and other organs. Within a few years, millions of 'nanobots' will float in arteries, veins and even capillary vessels in the human body as guardians of our individual health, and act and react 'autonomously'. We do not know the effect of this on the more subtle human vehicles, particularly as science is unfamiliar with this question or does not bother to ask. What happens to the soul and

left: Dancing Maenads. Basis for a sculpture, approximately 1st century BC. Museo Nazionale Romano [Museo delle Terme], Rome, Italy.

below: Joop Willems, The last life. Oil on cloth, 1984.

the consciousness? What is the danger of such manipulation?

Another example is the use of biometric security systems. With iris identification, a digital camera scans the iris of the eye and a computer compares almost three hundred properties of it with the stored data of its characteristic pattern. Only forty characteristics are compared of classical fingerprints. The iris is therefore unique and cannot be reproduced.

Is there an effect when the radiation of electrons is directly discharged on the brain through the eye? What happens physically, at the level of the soul, and spiritually? Does it influence the endocrine glands that are active in the head? The eyes are the 'mirror of the soul'



The eternal being within the human being is waiting for the liberation from matter-bound life in order to enter an entirely different life

and are, on a subtle-material level, directly linked with the pineal gland, which shows the same structure as the human eye according to modern science. These questions, too, are hardly ever asked and not answered.

Researchers in the USA go a step further, as we outlined in the introduction: they investigate the combination of microchips and biology into a 'neural machine'. This is supposed to occur by transferring the electrons of nucleic acids respectively the printing of the structure of thinking patterns onto silicon chips, with as ultimate consequence, according to Kurzweil: 'Humanity will be the first species on this planet to be replaced by its own inventions. But intelligent computers are not adversaries of humanity: they will not let him disappear, but merge with him.'

THE DREAM OF IMMORTALITY

The goal of this research is to separate the human spirit, or what is considered to be it, from vulnerable, unreliable and therefore superfluous physical bodies, and to supplant them to chips or nanobots. They argue that when the basis of life is digitalised, when the body, which is sensitive to disruption, will be made superfluous, and when dynamic systems with a self-organising structure are created, humanity will approach the dream of immortality.

The 'extropians', a group of computer specialists calling themselves 'transhumanistic futurists', are working on realising all imaginable technologies as quickly as possible in order to turn the world into a hyper-economic, virtual system. They predict that human beings will experiment with their bodies and their thinking and will therefore develop into a technologically skilled 'proto-superman', who is superior to the rest of humanity, which will ultimately

lead to the disappearance of the old species.

Hans Moravec, researcher and computer pioneer, spoke already during the eighties of the last century about the decline of humanity as a species, and he did so with great enthusiasm. He thinks that little has to remain of 'homo sapiens', 'the narrow-minded, biological, native inhabitant of planet earth'. The transformation from the inadequate, biological form of life into a better, digital state is imminent according to him. 'We will all become robots. This is as inevitable as it is admirable. Evolution is more important than we are. We are just parts of the greater whole.'

THE GREAT LONGING, THE GREAT MISUNDERSTANDING

To which revolution are Moravec and the other scientists referring? And to which greater whole? What is meant by a proto-superman, and what do scientists mean by immortality? What is intelligence, spirit, soul? What do consciousness, self-consciousness or all-consciousness mean to them?

In a way, we can say that the passionate urge of the intellectual human being to do research is in our life a desperate quest for immortality. Ultimate motives do certainly not always underlie this seeking, but a solid foundation and true knowledge are lacking only too often in the quest for the basis of life, humanity and the universe and the question of their significance. The restless longing for perfection, harmony and wisdom, just as the intense desire for unity, the removal of all separation and omnipresence, drive the human being. Only, he is seeking in the mortal world.

Particularly in the field of computer science, the myth of immortality, omnipotence and knowing everything is very strongly alive. But

how can we neutralise *the* characteristic of this nature?

The essence of our nature is transience, mortality. Everything created in this world will perish. Change is the only permanent feature of our existence. Sooner or later, any microchip will perish too, and the nanobot won't last forever either. What is eternal will always withdraw again from its mortal shell, because it does not belong to it. Electronic replacement will never be able to alter that. What is eternal in a human being is not waiting for an eternal life in this world. This would be like a permanent exile in the world of death. The eternal being within the human being is waiting for the liberation from matter-bound life in order to enter an entirely different life.

THE DECISIVE DISTINCTION

Today's science is usually based on a materialistic worldview. The extremely complicated brain with its intellectual thinking faculty is convinced that man will one day have wrested the last secrets from life and that this is only a matter of time. A Rosicrucian has a different worldview. His starting point for a renewed life is eternity, is the spiritual nucleus in his heart. In all his comings and goings, he lets himself be guided by that. And on his spiritual path of the liberation of the spiritual nucleus, a very different kind of thinking develops. This new thinking faculty is not intellectualistic, but sensible. It is an enlightened basis for a totally new consciousness, rooted in a different state of life.

THE SOLUTION

This concerns nothing less than the ancient struggle between light and darkness, which presently enters a new, decisive stage at the beginning of the new era. Negative dematerialisation will not only affect the individual human being, but also the whole development of humanity, the cosmos, our solar system and the entire universe. This struggle occurs within the human being:

there the forces of everything behind all of this are confronted with the Light. It is the ancient battle for the human souls, for their destruction or at least for inflicting damage to them in order to keep them captive.

However, ultimately everything will go as intended. Everything happens according to the laws of nature, according to the principle from Faust, which reads, freely expressed: 'The power that always wants evil and yet does what is good, is at work here.' Or put differently: there is power and help when we prepare ourselves and are open to it. What, then, can prevent us?

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The cry, the bridge, the spirit

Man is dual. All gnostic and hermetic writings, which form one testimony to the great possibilities in the human being, refer to this. All gnosis teaches the human being that he is essentially a god. The reality of his life and modern science, however, make it hard for him to grasp this idea.

The modern human being only believes what he can see, measure or explain to others, supported by proof. The spiritual sciences have lost the central place that they still had at the beginning of the modern era. Despite this development, human beings are again and again fascinated to discuss what is superhuman, God, the spirit. From the frontiers of science, where scientists are confronted with the paradoxes of their systems of reasoning, new impulses penetrate scientific thinking.

Is it a divine-spiritual aspect that drives human beings? Or is it the curiosity of the young, playful mind that sounds out the limits of its domain? The mere fact that these questions continuously occupy human beings shows that they cannot easily be answered. Apparently, the mind has its limits; there are apparently realms in which the mind is nor can be an authority.

Worldwide, many writings point out that the human being carries a spiritual sun in the centre of his system. Once this principle was active and even guided the human being. Nowadays, he is looking for it, or he ignores that he ever possessed it.

The Russian philosopher Nicolai Berdyayev wrote: "The contrast between spirit and nature must be considered a fundamental one. [...] The spirit is not a reality at all and is not "being" in the way in which being and reality are considered in nature."¹

He explains that everything belonging to the

human being of this nature – and this refers to the soul as well as to the physical body – is of this world and is only different from the animal as to content and quality. The spiritual human being, however, the original, true essence of the human being, belongs to a totally different reality. At this point, the question immediately crops up whether the spirit is at all active in this world. Berdyayev says about this: "Only in unimaginable depths, the spirit takes up the world and causes another light to radiate over it."²

This is why the spirit also touches the 'small world', the microcosm, of the human being in unimaginable depths only. If the human being has insight, he sees this touch by the spirit as the cause of his longing. However, it is a false guide when the longing does not focus on the spirit, but on its reflection in matter. The human being is seeking paradise, but if he does not 'know', he becomes ever more entangled in the jungle of his cultivated and civilised natural world.

SPIRIT AND SYMBOL

In his book *Freedom and spirit*, Nicolai Berdyayev describes the difference between spirit and nature by a quote from V L Solovyov: "Everything visible here on earth is only reflection, is only the shadow of what is invisible to the eye."³

He continues that our natural world does not know any depth, but receives purpose and meaning from another world, the world of the

Edvard Munch. The Cry (Despair), Oslo, 1893. In this psychological self-portrait by Munch, it is quite remarkably the landscape that is crying; the figure on the bridge can no longer cope with this accusation.

spirit. In accordance with the hermetic statement 'as above, so below', this also applies to the nature-born human being. With all his power of perception, he is so bound to the natural world, the 'reflection', that the eternal, spiritual element in his innermost depth is nothing more than a suspicion.

In order for the spiritual aspect to be able to reach him in such a way that he at least understands something, the language of symbols is used. Only through this language, we can recognise that which 'is invisible to the eye'. Archetypal images in the collective subconscious of humanity stimulate the longing for the

spiritual world, the origin of humanity.

The symbol of the spiritual aspect is like a bridge that is crossed to reach the people in this world. Deep longing leads the human being on this bridge, which is to him the first opportunity to cross the chasm between nature and spirit.

THE BABYLONIAN CONFUSION OF TONGUES

The original meaning of the spiritual symbols perishes in a multifaceted lack of clarity. At the same time, symbols are light and energy. Who does still possess the sensitivity to be able to recognise vibrating energy in symbols?

Although the light power of the spirit appeals to the origin, to the slumbering consciousness of the divine human being, we often come up with our own interpretations that appear to be very mental or are far too emotional to have any power. These individual reactions shatter the light into myriads of particles and split it ever further. With our natural powers, we are only able to recognise fragments.

These individual reactions and the resulting ambiguity cause a ‘Babylonian confusion of tongues’, in which the meaning of the symbolic language of the spirit drowns. In the Biblical story, the beginning of this decline is experienced, and it is attempted to counteract its effect and consequences by building the famous Tower of Babel.

There are, therefore, two ways of reacting to the symbols of the spirit. When we try to explain and systematise what is unimaginable, disharmony with the energy that touches us inwardly develops. When we listen to its resonance that, in Berdyayev’s words, resounds in the ‘unimaginable depth’, understanding, a ‘harmonious vibration’, awakens in our inner being.

Many attempts and disappointments make us conscious of the chasm between spirit and nature. As has been said above, the symbols of the spirit may serve as a bridge that leads us partly across the chasm. Then the bridge ends above the middle of the chasm. We do not yet see the second part. The human being who is standing on this bridge, can reach this point because he carries the divine human being as a feasible possibility within him. The human being learns to see himself as a sleeping God.

In his painting ‘The cry’, Edvard Munch has shown the human distress on this bridge: it is the human being who hears the cry of distress of nature with which he is one. This image evokes a strong aversion in a human being and at the same time, he is almost magically attracted to it. The cry is an autobiographic document; it shows Edvard Munch’s chronic fear of life. It is related to a concrete feeling that Munch described as follows in his diary:

‘I walked in the street with two friends, the

sun was setting – I sensed a melancholic mood – and the sky suddenly coloured crimson. I stopped and, dead tired, leaned against a fence, saw the flaming clouds like blood and swords – the dark blue fjord and the city – my friends continued, while I stood there trembling with fear – and I felt how a long, never-ending cry rent nature.’

Halfway this bridge we realise that we, beings of this nature, do not know anything and do not have any power in a liberating sense: ‘I stopped and, dead tired, leaned against a fence.’ With growing desperation, we try to awaken the sleeping God within us and to urge him to action, for only he can cross the bridge and the chasm.

DIVINE MERCY

But the cry is not answered; standing on the bridge above the chasm, the human being discovers that the missing part of the bridge surrounds him and guides him onward as it were. The striving human being above the chasm understands that only divine mercy has the power to awaken the sleeping God in the human being. Now the re-awakened spiritual human being enters the new life. Paul describes this with the words: ‘The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.’

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- ² *ibid.*
- ³ *ibid.*
- ⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:14 and 15:44.

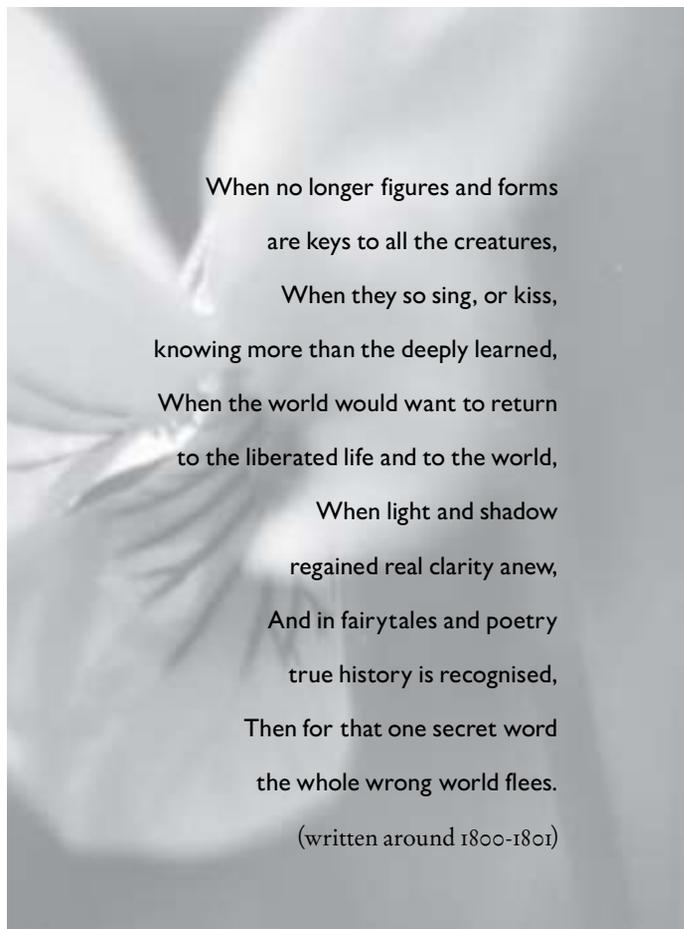
Friedrich von Hardenberg (1772-1806), or Novalis, was tall and slender, with clear, shining brown eyes. He radiated cheerful benevolence.

He was poet, lawyer and mining engineer. In 1794, he made his acquaintance with Sophie von Kühn, who was only twelve years old at the time. In a letter to his brother Erasmus, Novalis wrote that: 'a mere quarter of an hour has decided my future fate.' A year later, they became engaged. Three years later, in 1807, she died. From then on, Friedrich devoted himself to his work as a civil servant in salt mining. He moved to Freiberg in Saxony, where he enrolled at the famous mining academy.

In addition to his work and studies, Novalis wrote constantly. He had contacts with the leading poets and thinkers of Germany. He visited, for example, Schiller, for whom he had a deep admiration and whom he nursed for a few nights during one of his breakdowns. He also knew Goethe. Of them he said: 'Schiller writes for the few, Goethe for the many.' He also befriended other romantics, like the brothers Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck.

His work mainly consists of fragments that contain a treasure of ideas in virtually all areas of the arts and religion. Also in the field of the sciences, Novalis had his own approach. His decision to use the fragment is a conscious one: 'Everything is a seed of grain', is one of his sayings.

Novalis was an admirer of Jacob Boehme and he was also familiar with J V Andreae's *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreuz*. In both his poem *Wenn nicht mehr Zahlen und Figuren* (When no longer figures and forms) as well as his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, we find aspects from hermetic alchemy, which cast a totally individual light on the concepts of spirit and nature, as they were understood in



When no longer figures and forms
are keys to all the creatures,
When they so sing, or kiss,
knowing more than the deeply learned,
When the world would want to return
to the liberated life and to the world,
When light and shadow
regained real clarity anew,
And in fairytales and poetry
true history is recognised,
Then for that one secret word
the whole wrong world flees.

(written around 1800-1801)

the Romantic era.

These lines of poetry are valid worldwide and are, certainly in the German-speaking regions, regarded as Novalis' best-known ones. They also serve as an example of the romantic concept of the relationship between spirit and nature at the end of the eighteenth century.

However, until now, they are usually interpreted far too romantically, because their connection to Novalis' novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, and therefore their hermetic background, is usually not taken into account. For a long time, the image of Novalis as an eccentric, dreamy, melancholic young poet has dominated. Many readers (also scholars) have been misled by the various lines of the poem. The first lines may indeed lead to the wrong view that Novalis harboured an aversion to a way of thinking in which mathematics or geometry play a role. Yet the contrary is the case. Novalis adage was: 'The highest form of life is mathematics'.

Novalis fulfilled his professional and social duties as a mining engineer and geologist with

page 27: Seal of John Dee. London, British Library, Sloane

page 30: Photo Pentagram

passion and to the best of his ability. His achievements were of a high scientific level. In addition, he was also a lawyer and a member of the board. He did his pioneering literary work on the side. He was also a down-to-earth man, while he led his life on a high spiritual level.

In the few lines of the poem, this spirituality is reflected. In poetical language, Novalis formulates five conditions that must be fulfilled for the wrong world to change into true clarity again, so that it may be saved. What do these lines tell us?

THE FIRST CONDITION

‘When no longer figures and forms
are keys to all the creatures...’

His novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* speaks in a completely different context of ‘figures and forms’. They refer to the so-called ‘writer’ in the fairytale of Klingsohr. What he writes does usually not pass the test of wisdom. Only a large number of figures and geometrical forms remain ‘which he diligently strung on a thread and carried as an ornament around his thin neck.’

Heinrich von Ofterdingen is an ‘educational novel’ in optima forma. It is Novalis’ reaction to Goethe’s cycle *Wilhelm Meister*, which he found dry and conventional. The story plays in the Middle Ages. We encounter the protagonist at the moment that he spoke with a stranger. Their conversations continue to occupy his mind and during a sleepless night, he realises that he truly wants to know. When he finally falls asleep, the image of a blue flower, framing the face of a girl, appears to him as the ‘purpose of all purposes’. After that, Heinrich embarks on a journey together with his mother. From Eisenach in central Germany, they travel to Bavaria, to the city of Augsburg, where his grandfather lives.

Heinrich is a kind of Parcival, shy and modest, easily enthusiastic for goodness and truth and, at the same time, highly impressionable. He is very susceptible and open to all beauty in every respect, he loves the arts, and poetry in particular. His lively fantasy and imagination cause him to see the miracle in everything he encounters. Adventures and countless encounters abound in this novel. During his journey, he meets merchants, a hermit who is also a philosopher, a miner and a girl from the Middle East. In the town of his grandfather, Augsburg, the poet Klingsohr initiates him into the secrets and wonderful beauty of poetry. Heinrich loses himself in so much beauty and for the first time falls deeply in love with Klingsohr’s daughter Mathilde. Klingsohr himself ends the first part of the novel with a long and allegorical fairytale, in which Heinrich’s and Mathilde’s lives are briefly outlined.

The second part was never finished. It would have started with the death of his beloved and Heinrich’s despair, urging him to start preparing for a long pilgrimage. Novalis intended the novel to ‘slowly turn into a fairytale’, and he wanted ‘to go deeper into the themes of the conversations and fairytales of the first part: the unity of life and death, feminine and masculine, evening and morning land.’ Everything would culminate in an ‘apotheosis of poetry’, which the, in the meantime accomplished, poet Heinrich is then able to write.

There is much variety in the novel: prose and poetry alternate; fairytales and dialogues provide liveliness, and contemplative pieces, seriousness.

‘The most remarkable prejudice is, that man has been denied the ability to surpass himself, to consciously surpass his senses. At any moment, a human being can be a supersensory being. Without this, he would not be a world citizen, but rather an animal. We must not only be ordinary human beings, we must be more than human beings. To be human is after all to be equal to the universe. Man is unlimited. He must simultaneously be something definite and indefinite. The perfect human being must live in more places and in more human beings at the same time; he must continuously have a wide social environment and many events at his disposal. Then the true, great presence of spirit is formed, turning the human being into an actual world citizen.’

This writer is a sober-minded, unimaginative fustian. Novalis describes him as a caricature of someone we would now describe as a technocrat. The writer is fanatically utilitarian. Usefulness is his 'key to all creatures'. It is clear that Novalis could not see anything liberating in such a view of human destiny.

THE SECOND CONDITION

'When they so sing, or kiss,
knowing more than the deeply learned...'

Novalis had more sympathy for those who so sing or kiss than for the niggling writer or very learned scholar. He described these types, usually found at universities and considered very learned, somewhat ironically as 'deeply learned', because they are often pillars of the wrong order, of the wrong nature of the world. They imagine themselves learned but their knowledge is actually dead.

With singing people (i. e. artists) and those who love each other, the more important knowledge, that which really counts, develops, provided they fully devote themselves to what they do. According to Novalis, artists and lovers have in common that they are creative with their whole personality.

Poetry and love are the central themes in Novalis' work. To him, 'Love is the ultimate goal of world history – the unum of the universe.' Love as cosmic 'sympathy' is what keeps the universe together in its infinitely many manifestations and unites everything that is separated. 'God is love. Love is the highest reality, the primordial ground.' It is primordial ground and ultimate goal, alpha and omega.

This does not sound strange to us, but we might wonder what the concrete meaning of love is in this context. Or is everything lost in 'feeling'?

'Absolutely not,' Novalis calls out: 'The

theory of love is the highest form of science.' As the teachings of the highest Eros, it is accessible to our higher thinking faculty, requires philosophical effort and is even suitable as a study object in science.

THE THIRD CONDITION

'When the world would want to return
to the liberated life and to the world...'

These are enigmatic lines. Here Novalis clearly plays with the idea of two worlds. It might be interpreted as follows: when the (false, unfree) world would return to free life and to the (real, true) world... how would this happen? How can the false world return to the true world?

The whole poem represents a process of change; a process that can be seen as a return to a 'golden age'. Yet, this is not a 'return' in the sense of 'turning back', but rather as regaining, as a new achievement. How does a false world actually change however? What are the driving forces, who are the acting individuals?

THE FOURTH CONDITION

'When light and shadow
regained real clarity anew...'

Novalis also recognised the division of the world in the separation of light and shadow. They need to be re-united to place nature into another, or rather true clarity. The geologist Hardenberg found the pattern for this clarity in the crystal. In his novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, Novalis wrote: 'They (the crystals) are transparent nature.' In our current usage, 'crystal clear' has a positive meaning. Precious stones are considered the most valuable specimens of crystals, and later we shall see that the central place in the novel is occupied by a pre-

cious stone, namely a ruby.

‘True clarity’ is a romantic key word. It indicates the state in which any separation has been eliminated.

THE FIFTH CONDITION

‘And in fairy tales and poetry
true history is recognised...’

Fairytales and poetry offer a way to experience the elimination of the separation suggested by our thinking in opposites. Here we find ourselves in the centre of Novalis’ magical realism. Through fairytales and poetry, the author wants to confront us with the control of what is magical in the world, still hidden to the rational mind. The magical cosmos is the true one. Novalis wanted to *de*-enchant the false world and not *en*chant it, as so often has been assumed.

He takes courage: when we treat the world as a world of fairytales and myths, the real order will automatically become visible. This is not a call to vague magic. Absolutely not: Novalis was a poet and translated the ancient alchemical transfiguration, the art of transmutation, into the medium of creative language. Against the power of this ‘creative word’, already referred to in the first lines of the Gospel of John, the ‘false being’ simply cannot hold out.

THE METAMORPHOSIS

‘Then for that one secret word
the whole wrong world flees.’

When all the ‘when’s’ have been realised, that is, when all conditions have been fulfilled, the spoiled, straying world has matured. It will disappear, dissolve, just as in the hermetic-alchemical process the base substances dissolve and

change into ‘gold’. In alchemy, the philosopher’s stone is the catalyst. Here we encounter, instead of a stone, a secret word that apparently has a similarly powerful, magical effect as the philosopher’s stone.

Just as in hermetic alchemy the adept passes through a process consisting of various stages to obtain the stone, in Novalis’ poem initially seemingly utopian, fairy-tale, poetic circumstances develop, before the secret word can appear in the world.

There is a rich tradition of secret words and codes for deciphering texts and phenomena. The ancient gnosis used them as sound-magical rites. Where would the secret word mentioned in the poem come from?

A BLOOD-RED RUBY

In the third chapter of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the so-called fairy tale of Atlantis is told. It received its name from the place of action, the legendary island of Atlantis. In this fairy tale, a blood-red ruby plays a decisive role. A royal princess loses the stone and a young man wandering in the forest finds it. A secret word in ‘mysterious signs’ is engraved in the stone. The young man falls completely under the spell of the stone and spends most of the night looking at the ruby. By dawn, he is filled with the irresistible longing to express his thoughts and feelings of love for the princess in poetry. He wants to offer the created lines, together with the stone, to the princess at their next meeting.

The ruby brings the young man and the royal princess together. This not only changes the two lovers, because of the celebration of a holy wedding, but also the king and the entire kingdom return to the ‘true world’: ‘Endlessly the tears of joy flowed. The poets started to sing

and the evening was a holy eve for the whole country, and since then, life became a beautiful feast for the inhabitants.' The metamorphosis of the world, in which 'those who sing or kiss' have an essential mediating function, emanates from the secret word in the ruby. The ruby plays the role of the philosopher's stone.

In the outline for the second part of his novel, Novalis speaks amongst other things of a quest for a ruby, for which a setting has been reserved in the crown of the emperor.

The very valuable precious stone, shining as a fiery spark, is Novalis' natural image for eternity, the light or spirit spark in the human heart. The carbuncle 'shines in the shadows of the night, and spreads a great supersensorial clarity... He who possesses the ruby, knows the secret of the world. The stone is not an external object. It refers symbolically to a potential of skills, dormant in every human being.'

It achieves 'the coming together of the earthly self and the heavenly I.' The bearer emanates the secret word, for which 'all wrongs' flee.

THE LIBERATION OF NATURE

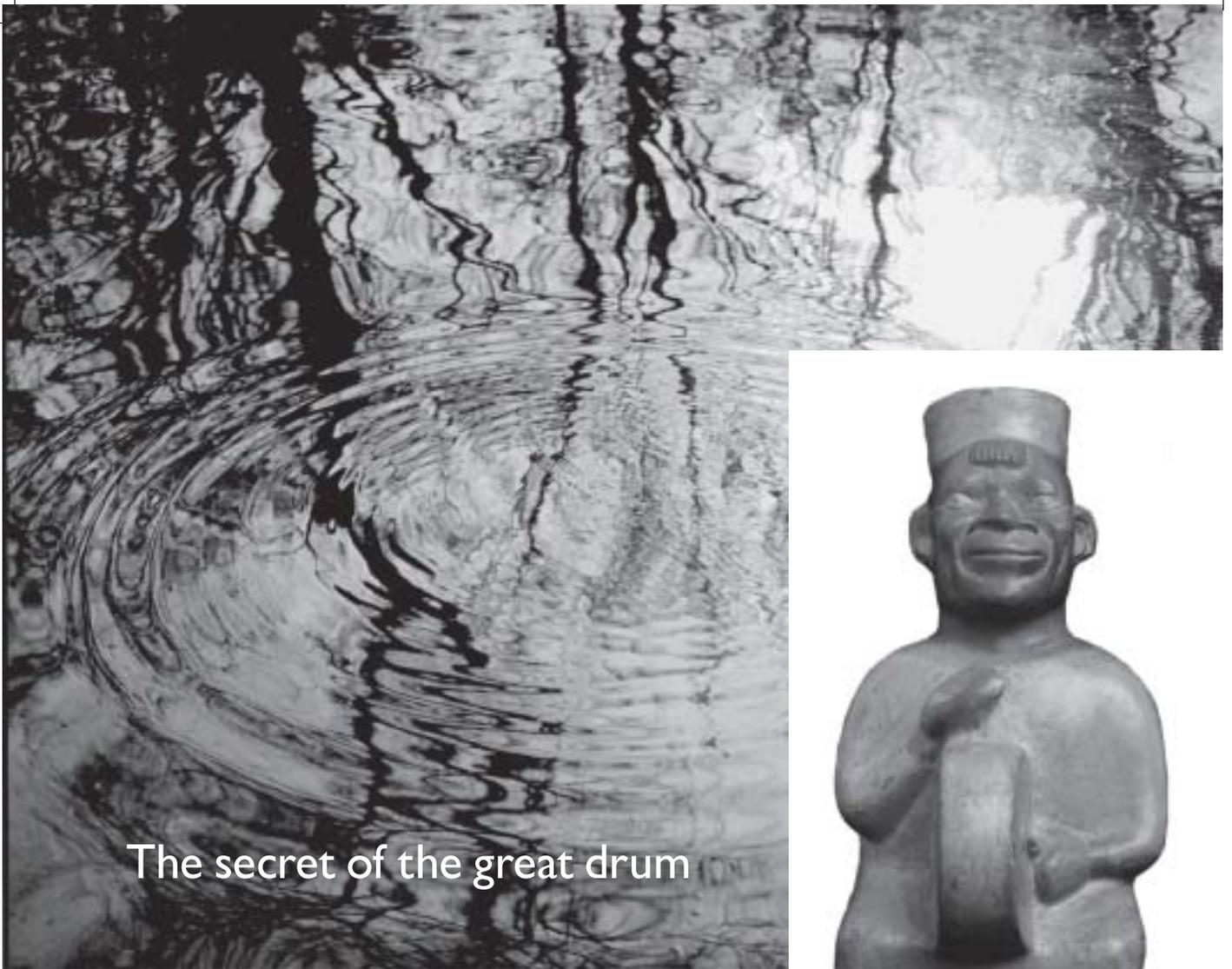
Novalis did not consider nature and spirit dualistic, but he nevertheless spoke of the existence of two worlds. He showed the extent of the unification of spirit and nature mainly in love and friendship, as far as their egocentric inclinations have been overcome. Also when performing other creative activities, or when contemplating works of art, experiences may arise that transcend the reality of the 'false world'. Nature as a whole is able to change and dissolve; it is waiting for the self-liberating human being, who departs for the 'golden age'.

Yet, true liberation requires more than altruistic love, friendship and creative activity. Novalis also says: creativity (in the sense of

self-creation) is not everything and cannot do everything. During our wanderings, something from the other side has to come to our aid: a secret word, a sign. Without it, the *opus magnum* cannot be accomplished. This secret sign is 'like a ruby' hidden in the human being. The human being wanders through the world to find it back. When he can decipher the secret code, the soul can change, become heavenly, and ultimately the whole kingdom can be changed. Like the ancient alchemists, philosophers like Paracelsus and Jacob Boehme, we must patiently wait for the transmutation, in genuine humility and self-surrender.

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The secret of the great drum

He who is interested in music and looks at concert programs, has probably discovered that an increasing number of groups of Japanese taiko drummers perform in Western Europe. In Japan, playing taiko drums is an ancient tradition. This has nothing to do with dance music, but is a separate art form. In the past, in Japan, the ancestors were called up with the help of taiko drums.



The borders of human settlements were also marked by the sound of the drum standing in the centre of the village square. The village extended to where the sound of the drum could still be heard.

left: Cheerful drummer from the Mochica culture, approx. 800 AD. This culture blossomed between 0 and approx. 800 AD in the valleys of Moche and Chicarna on the Peruvian coast.

For all of us, this is very far away and long ago, and we may wonder why this particular art form is presently so popular in Western Europe. What is so fascinating to the audience?

ENORMOUS DIAMETERS

Taiko drums are made of the wood of the Japanese fir or pine-tree and are stretched with cowhide. There are different types and sizes and each drum has its own name. The biggest one has a diameter of up to 3,70 meters and weighs around twelve hundred kilograms.

The drums are placed on their side on a stand, so that the drumhead points forward like a solar disk. The drummer assumes a pose that looks like a tree, with widely spread legs so that it looks as if they are rooted in the ground. The upper part of the body and the head are upright and immovable like the trunk, while the arms are moving from the shoulders, exactly like a storm moves the branches of a tree. One always has, therefore, the impression as if the drummer wants to make an invisible storm audible, a power that, through him, directly transfers its rhythm to the drum, to matter.

Before he begins, the drummer kneels in meditative silence and intense concentration before the drum. Then he suddenly rises and begins to drum with simple, wooden drumsticks. He beats with all his power, totally uninhibited, though with perfect concentration and self-control.

The drummer of the great drum indicates the basic rhythm. He is the 'master' of the group of drummers and opens each piece with a single, powerful stroke. The great drum produces deep, enormously strong tones, which can be felt vi-

brating in one's bones. The other drums produce different fast rhythms, with which beautiful and very varied sound structures are built. Often a bamboo flute joins the group.

The group of drummers consists of six to twelve musicians and plays completely synchronously as if with one drumstick. Often, the drum pieces have nature as their theme. They reflect, for example, the beauty and the movements of the starry sky. All in all, such a concert is for a receptive audience an extraordinary acoustical and also visual experience, which for whatever reason deeply touches them and which has a lasting effect.

What is the reason for this? What is the secret of the great drum?

THE LIBERATION OF THE GODDESS OF THE LIGHT

In Japanese tradition, a legend is connected with the great drum. It is the story of Aratura, the sun goddess who gave the earth light and warmth and made life possible. However, she had a brother with a dark and bad character, which grew ever more malicious and horrible with the passage of time. This made the sun goddess so angry and sad that she withdrew from the earth's surface and hid with her irritation in a dark cave in the bowels of the earth. Then the people became sad, ill and weak because they no longer received light and warmth, whereupon the goddess's brother repented. In order to bring the sun goddess back, a large drum was placed before the entrance of her cave. The drum was beaten until the people began to laugh joyfully and started to move with its rhythm, and the goddess emerged from the bowels of the earth. Then it became light again on earth and the people were cured of their illness and weakness.



GODS AND MEN

We do not only encounter the impressive symbol of the drum in the Japanese world of myths. It can also be found in the traditions of the holy scriptures and legends of all continents. The powerful images, with which the drum has always been linked, possess cosmic as well as microcosmic dimensions; they concern the world of the gods and also the inner world of human beings. It seems as if the drum connects both these worlds in a mysterious way.

THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

The sound of the great drum resembles the thunder after a flash of lightning during a thunderstorm. Lightning strikes and thunder follows. It is the voice of matter in the earthly atmosphere as a reaction to the tremendous turmoil caused by the discharge of the electrical fire. Also the human being, matter, possesses an atmosphere, a microcosm that surrounds him as an aura. To him, the vibration of the great drum is the sound of the voice of heaven that is imprisoned in matter, which responds to the touch of the electrical fire of the spirit. When the drum is tuned well, it calls with all its strength, from the depth in which it is anchored with its mighty body, to the light that seems to come from up high, but in fact surrounds it. The drummer of the great drum, the human being, does his utmost to produce this sound. Such a call is always answered.

THE SEVEN THUNDERS OF THE APOCALYPSE

In the *Apocalypse* of John, the stage of the last, the seventh, trumpet is announced by seven thunders. These seven thunders were cosmological phenomena that people at the time interpreted as something of a god.

Catharose de Petri writes in her book *The Living Word* that they concern the science of the seven rays.

They concern a first touch of the human

being by the seven-spirit, as a herald of further development. The seven rays of the spirit call up these seven thunderclaps in the atmosphere of the microcosm. They are moments of gaining consciousness. Seven strikes on the great drum of heaven announce the stage of the last trumpet. The seven thunderclaps symbolise the process of gaining consciousness in the microcosm.¹

THE ADMONISHING DRUM OF THE GODS

A Buddhist textbook from the twelfth century speaks of the 'drum of the gods' as a symbol of the enlightened activity of the Buddha. We may interpret the text as saying: 'In the palace of total victory, the drum of the gods resounds, the dharma drum, of which the name "reminds of the power of the noble teachings". It urges the careless gods and reminds them through its sound of the four seals, the characteristics of the teachings of the Buddha:

"All phenomena are transient, all phenomena are free from a self, everything that is burdened with the flaw of duality is sorrow, and liberation from sorrow means peace"

SHIVA'S DRUM

In the Indian tradition, the drum is an attribute of Shiva, the highest deity. He is the god that links the fire with the earth, and therefore, the spirit with matter. He does so with the drum in his right hand. He creates and destroys by beating his drum. As long as he drums, he creates the world, and when he stops, it perishes again. The power of creating and destroying corresponds to the activity of the first ray of the seven-spirit. However, the drum is also the instrument that structures the primordial sub-

left: Drums and musical instruments on a manuscript of an Indian wedding. Manuscript, 1561 AD.

page 38: Handprints, Patagonia, approx. 10,000 BC.

stance, forms the atoms and restores order in the universe. This corresponds to the effect of the seventh ray of the seven-spirit, which is unity of energy and therefore grants new energy. It is not without reason that the drum is used as a ritual and magical instrument during religious ceremonies in Asian countries.

When the great drum is creatively active, it not only produces structure, order and a lively rhythm, but it is also an instrument to express great joy. According to Biblical records, the kettledrums are struck to praise God.

THE WAR DRUM

We hear the destructive aspect when the great war drums are used, or the terrible drums described in the book *The Lord of the Rings*, which have a depressing effect. When the companions in this story cross the systems of the caves of Moria during the nadir of their wanderings – a symbolic description in which the human being as a member of a group overcomes the most compact matter – they become terrified and jumpy through the dull drumming from the bowels of the earth.²

It is said that in a distant stage of Lemuria, drums were instruments through which the human consciousness of that time was forced into and bound to matter.

THE INNER DRUM

Then there is another drum in the human ear, our own drum, by which the vibrations of the surrounding world are transmitted to our soul or spirit-soul. Via the eardrum in our external ear, the vibrations reach the middle ear, where hammer and anvil work like a drum, and via the cochlea transform acoustic impulses into nerve pulses. To our consciousness, our hearing ‘creates’ the world through the drum in our ear, and also literally does so, for how selectively do

or don’t some sounds or tones penetrate to the consciousness. Totally attuned to our emotions, to ‘what we are occupied with’, the ear has a very specific and direct relationship with the soul.

However, when our consciousness enters the silence, the ear of the soul automatically opens in another direction. An inner vibration, a new sound is produced. The ‘voice of the silence’ is heard. Tradition often refers to this as a kind of ‘thunder’. In one of Bach’s chorales it is said, for example: ‘O *Ewigkeit, O Donnerwort, O Schwert das durch die Seele bohrt, O Anfang sonder Ende. (Eternity, thou thunderous word, O Sworth that through the soul doth bore, Beginning with no ending).*’³

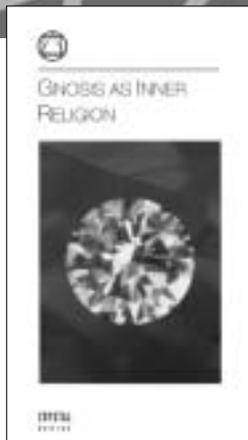
The big drum of the divine exhortation permanently resounds, even if we do not hear it. Its sound is transmitted until the end of all times; until we lend our ear to the mighty, sustaining sound within us – and its vibrations transfigure us into creative beings who have become part again of the original all-consciousness.

NOTES

- ¹ Catharose de Petri, *The Living Word*, chapter 17. Rozekruis Pers, Haarlem, 2000.
- ² J R R Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*. George Allen & Unwin, London, 1954/1955.
- ³ Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750). In: Bach Werke Verzeichnis 20, 60, 397 and 513. (Text by Johann Rist, 1642)

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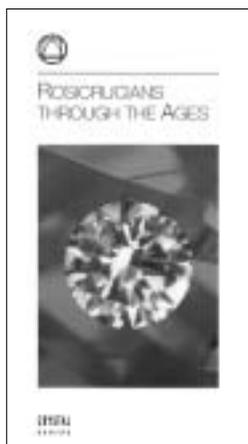
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