Immensely rich – infinite debt
According to the philosopher Kierkegaard love creates an infinite debt: Not to the one receiving it, but rather to the one who loves. That can’t be true, we initially thought and so did everyone to whom we presented this dictum. He, who loves, gives his love to others. By receiving this love the others become somewhat indebted to him. That is how we would calculate it, right? No way, according to Kierkegaard it is exactly the other way around. He may write in a rather difficult way to follow, but after reading it again and again we finally understood what he meant. Love that creates a debt cannot be true love. This kind of love cannot to be paid back. Someone who gives love, does not become less through giving, and therefore does not need to receive anything in return to make up for a deficit. In fact, according to Kierkegaard, through the giving of love one’s own debt becomes only greater, finally to become infinitely large. How is that possible? Well, this great thinker clarifies it in this way: love is a gift, a gift from the universe, or from the Above, or from the One, as he would say. Who has love, is immeasurably rich and for that he is infinitely indebted to the cosmos, the All-Being. Thus he does not need anything in return for his love, for in that love he is full of gratitude for that which enables him to love, God, or the One. Such a thought goes far beyond words.
The Norwegian painter Nicolai Astrup was only 47 years old when he died in 1928. He is considered a Neo-romanticist, the latter-day followers of the romantic movement of the first half of the nineteenth century. It is said that the atmosphere he is able to call up is typical Norwegian, which in undoubtedly true. Yet something larger seems to come through, which is universal. For example, is the girl on the bench in the painting one of Astrup’s daughters, having come down for a midnight celebration? Or is it a fairy or sylphid, one of the quicksilver-like etheric beings from Norwegian folklore that are always present but dart off when a human being looks at them? All the visible life in Astrup’s work vibrates in a mysterious way in an outflowing of the One, of Tao, of Gnosis – ideas which at the beginning of the twentieth century were bon ton among the Symbolists and Fauvists. A vibration that also Astrup tried to catch in his work.


Cover: Nicolai Astrup, Living room at Sandaskrond, 1921
The Hierophants (the Egyptian priests) are feverishly agitated: Apophis, the monster that is dragon and snake in one and is the essence of evil, has appeared. Apophis attacks Osiris with unexpected force using his terrifying tail, his long and sharp talons and his fire-breathing snout that causes poisonous burns. He tears Osiris’ body into numerous pieces and scatters them in all directions.

Isis, the gracious Goddess overcomes the bad influence of Apophis on mankind: she shatters its head. She then collects all the parts of Osiris’ body except for his penis and reassembles them and thus brings him back to life. From now on Osiris is an anthropomorphic God, meaning that he is an ineffectual God, a shadow God, a black God.

The Hierophants are devastated. The law of the gracious trinity, the tri-unity of the three leaves is destroyed. The original unity does not exist anymore. The divine triangle cannot clarify anything anymore. “Osiris is a black God” they repeatedly tell their Neophytes. And he gets all the weaker because the gracious duality of Osiris-Isis can also not be understood anymore.

But everything must at one time return to the original unity. Osiris thus transforms into Horus. That is: into the son of Isis. And the lost reproductive organ becomes the Eye of Osiris. This Eye, this highest guardian of knowledge and true wisdom, will show the mortal human being the path of higher science. It is a path where evil can still often be encountered. Therefore the Eye of Osiris is also the eye of conscience.

The Gnosis remains close to us, even when we are at the nadir of our life. The Gnosis is present, first as a fire in our conscience and then as a realization that brings the gift of a higher consciousness. Antonin Gadal brought this to our attention again and again by referring to old scriptures and bringing them to life. In this text he brings the Egyptian mysteries in connection with Moses and the story of Parsifal. This spiritual heritage was so far preserved only as a Dutch translation.
The Eye of Osiris is the shining tower of perfection on the path to the Holy Grail.

The Eye of Osiris unrelentingly separates the blameworthy human being from God. It inwardly divides the divine human being - the gracious two-fold being. Once separated from God, the unity can only be regained through God. Friends, hell is the separateness from God and the dreadful pangs of conscience! This is what Origines said in this respect: Hell is the pangs of conscience brought on by the Eye of Osiris.

Joy

Suddenly there is great joy in the sanctuary: the triangle, the divine symbol has regained its grandeur in its entirety. The resurrection of Osiris restores again this triangle and in its centre the Eye of Osiris finds its place.

Later when Moses will have arrived at the Holy Land, the Hierophants will say: 'Osiris is a black God, but the Eye of Osiris finds its place.'

This triangle and in its centre the Eye of Osiris other favored symbols. Wisdom, the high Gnosis, had three:

1. The gate with the two-winged square-shaped door, symbol for the universal equilibrium. 4+4=8, a sacred number.
2. The Caduceus with the two snakes. This represented originally the Gnosis or Wisdom. On the horizontal line it later became the symbol of Medicine.
3. The cross with two horizontal beams. It is the Tri-unity that represents the revelation of the providence, the revelation of God in this nature order through Christ.

This cross is the great sign of the Hierophants, of the High priests. It is a symbol of eternity, just as the circle is. It is an eightfold priestly staff, which is at the same time threefold. It is the hierarchic double cross of the staff of the High priests.

The barque of Isis, retained by Moses, is the basis of the cross of the Grandmaster. This is the barque of the candidate, the esoteric sign of all our brothers and sisters of the old Brotherhood. Godfrey of Bouillon chose the double cross as coat of arms for his kingdom in Jerusalem. We find it again in our consecrated centers. And it also became the cross of Lorraine.

Can you understand what 8000 years of history of the universal knowledge means to us? Especially in this present time, where the Gnosis touches the entire world and urges it to a reaction. The barque of Isis, retained by Moses, is at the same time the basis of the cross of our Grandmaster. It is the barque that leads the candidate to the inner kingdom. Cross and barque form our spiritual heritage. We will keep them in our hearts!
The excellent philosopher Benedict Spinoza distinguishes three kinds of knowledge in his philosophy. In his life-course, called the ‘Ethics’, he describes:

1st: Knowledge derived from sensory impressions that show little or no coherence between them;

2nd: Reasonable knowledge. Through Reason (or mind) which the sensory perceptions are organized and made into a coherent whole. The contradictions and characteristics of sensory life are thus distinguished and held apart. By this process develops the knowledge that Spinoza indicated as an adequate understanding or true knowledge of the properties of things;

3rd: Intuitive knowledge, the highest form of knowledge by which the properties of things are properly derived and understood in the necessary connection of the one indivisible Nature.

Let us not confuse this form of knowledge with the term ‘synthesis’, which the philosopher Hegel uses in his ‘dialactics’. There thesis and antithesis lead to synthesis, and thus, ever higher, an ever more perfect humanity evolves into the perfection of life and fulfillment. Thus, in Hegel’s philosophy, there is an evolution of the natural man within the framework of the dialectic life. But in Spinoza’s work, the third form of knowledge is transcendent, beyond the dialectic.

This third form of knowledge is God, the Gnosis, the highest object of Knowledge, the ‘Absolute’ where there is no contradiction. God is the ‘Hidden One’. He is incomprehensible for dialectical consciousness, which is made up of contradictions, a tangled blend of good and evil. Spinoza called this third form of knowledge ‘The Reasonable Love for God’, the ‘Amor Intellectualis Dei’. It is no longer us who, if we may say so, think of things, but rather, the things are perceived in us by a new revelatory spiritual principle, the Logos.

The three forms of knowledge correspond to three types of men: the early Gnostics spoke of the ‘hylic’ man, the ‘psychic’ man and the ‘pneumatic’ man.

Gnosis and Life cannot be separated: Faith and Life, inner knowing, or true Knowledge, and Life, are one. But inner knowledge, or Gnosis, does not come naturally—it is born out of necessity and maturity-of-life.
Connectedness

However, we must be mindful of the fact that the three forms of knowledge are interconnected within us: we may carry these three forms of knowledge in us simultaneously.

There is first: the physical, materialistically oriented man; secondly, the person who, on the basis of a multitude of experiences, becomes sensitive to the soul and tries to follow her laws; and thirdly, the spirit-soul-man in which the new soul experiences, becomes sensitive to the soul and transfiguring activity, if there is openness and receptiveness. That receptiveness is all the spiritual potential that, as atomic power, can start its transmuting power can develop and be applied in its entirety. The whole being is involved: the light-field of the Gnosis. This last form of Knowledge can also be called Gnosis.

This intuitive Knowledge originates in the heart and radiates from the heart. It is the blossoming Rose of the heart which, through your search, your desire for real Life, for Truth and Unity, can communicate her strength, her pure power and her grace. In the heart is the spirit-soul-man in which the new soul and even the bitterness of mundane life are turned away from, the unsatisfactoriness will be present when a person has gone through his or her life, have an inner happiness, natural personality: gloominess, depression, jealousy, rivalry, nihilism, revenge, hate, reluctance, criticism, pessimism, and so on.

Light of the heart encountered on the path of the cross - which we can call in this connection the path of the rosary cross - will break through into the head-sanctuary.

The cross of nature is transformed into the cross of Light in which the Light, the rose, the born-again soul, flourish in unspeakable beauty. The inflow of the Gnosis into the consciousness is an intense grace.

Gnosis and Life cannot be separated: Faith and Life, Inner knowing, or True Knowledge, and Life, are one. But inner knowledge or Gnosis does not come naturally - it is born out of necessity and a maturity of life. Everything in this Plan is logical and necessary, every phenomenon is propelled by conflicts and divisions. Everything that comes into being, in dialectical life, in the power of the Rose. Gnosis, the Amor Intellectualis Dei, therefore means recognition and a breaking down of many barriers and obstacles: a turmoil of confusion, entanglement, obstruction of insight, all the characteristics of 'the night'. These include the negative emotional thought patterns that are inherent to the natural personality: gloominess, depression, jealousy, rivalry, nihilism, revenge, hate, reluctance, criticism, pessimism, and so on.

The third type of 'knowing' person will, in his or her life, have an inner happiness and equanimity which is disrupted by nothing, because he is focused on the fulfillment of the Logos Plan, which includes all and everything. Knowing ourselves as separate existences and so on.

The Reasonable Love for God is therefore the movement of man, in which he knows that he is connected with his entire being and in a lasting alignment with the high order and lawfulness of the Gnosis. It is not enough to think only about or watch or study the possible 'interesting' spiritual or historical aspects of the Gnosis. Full involvement is required here, to enable the encounter between two completely opposing worlds, between two opposing power and radiation activities of two different natures, and to make that encounter real.

To express it metaphorically, this is the meeting between ‘day’ and ‘night’ - the night in which everything seems entangled, where there are no clear images, where everything is blurred, confused, entangled, and there is nobody who knows the Way, or can give you advice - and the ‘day’, on the other hand, which is bright, in which everything is clear, transparent, ready and positive. Both day and night are present in human life. This inevitably involves a strong inner conflict and an inner struggle that must be fought. It is clear, however, that no human being is directly prepared for that purpose. After all, he was born and raised in the nature of ‘night’ - a nature in which everything shows itself in oppositions, in division and separation, in time and space. While the forces of the Gnosis, on the other hand, are timeless, undivided, without contradiction, ineffable and true.

So the Gnosis starts her graceful activity in the cave of Bethlehem, where the Star of the new-born Soul shows in the respiration-field of a yearning human. By this is meant that the liberating Light, the True and the Good, is therefore born, and will develop its activity, in a still dark world. That has to be taken into account, otherwise you may well be deceiving yourself. The road that now opens up to us, this Via Dolorosa, leads to Golgotha (which literally means ‘skull’) where the Gnosis starts her graceful activity in the cave of Bethlehem, where the Star of the new-born Soul shows in the respiration-field of a yearning human. By this is meant that the liberating Light, the True and the Good, is therefore born, and will develop its activity, in a still dark world. That has to be taken into account, otherwise you may well be deceiving yourself. The road that now opens up to us, this Via Dolorosa, leads to Golgotha (which literally means ‘skull’) where the
The pure Reason strives for eternal totality. However, desire for and focus on the sensory life continue, as long as the individual sees things temporarily and partially, as long as consciousness remains 'nightly'.

The happiness and joy of human beings lie in the sight of the necessity of things through the necessity of divine Nature; that is, when one observes things in the light of eternity, or God in Nature, yes, in Everything.

The poet, the artist, the musician, the soul-sensitive ones, they try to shape this 'necessity', written in and through the world-ether, in sound, colour, rhythm, relationship.

The scientist seeks the essence and definition of these laws in formulas, and to be 'master of nature'. Nevertheless, we find that the fullness of the 'Amor Intellectualis Dei' is formless, not perceptible to the sensory human being. It manifests itself only in the completely silent nous, the still mind. Hermes summarizes this as follows: 'What is in the Spirit can only be perceived by the spirit-eye. Therefore, O soul, seek real understanding of the existence of things and understand their essence, but ignore their quantity and quality. The existence of things and their essence is simple, and the soul can understand this immediately without a mediator, but their quality and quantity are multiplied and bounded by space and time'.

What is seen in space-time as an infinite chain of cause and effect is, from the point of view of eternity, the eternal and unchangeable, thus necessarily the will of God. The illusion that, in time, freedom could maybe exist, is, in this light, replaced by the certainty that freedom beyond time is possible!

In this knowledge, through this knowledge, the soul is prepared to connect with the spiritual Light of the World Soul that penetrates and encompasses the universe and all creatures. The golden wedding garment is now woven.

We have seen that this Light is primarily known in the heart, in which lies the core of pure consciousness, of the Gnosis. We have discussed three forms of knowledge. It is, therefore, good to establish that there are no separations between these three forms. Nothing like: first this and then that. All the forms of knowledge, including the one seen by Spinoza as the 'highest' form, the 'Amor Intellectualis Dei', all exist within us. It is good to be aware of this.

The first form of knowledge we discussed consists of the ideas and opinions and representations obtained from 'hear sayings', the information derived from random and inconsistent sensory impressions. It is present, but it is not an active self-existing element in our consciousness; the contrary is true. It is a passive source of prejudices, opinions and assumptions. By it, the bright, clear and transparent 'Light of the Day', the condition of living for the growth of the soul, is obscured and obstructed. This first form of knowledge is widespread, and is completely coincidental and interdependent, a closed and limited system. It is the 'wisdom' of which Paul in the Bible observes that it is 'as a foolishness with God'.

It is different with the knowledge of the second kind, the reasonable knowledge. This Knowledge is a dynamic, ever-expanding, positive and ever-active, -an ever flowing source of inner wealth.

This second type of knowledge is gained, as we noted before, by sorting and estab-
lishing, on the basis of reason, all the sensory information, ideas and information, into a true order, a coherent whole.

Looking closer at the knowledge of the first kind, it is important to understand and see through its characteristics, namely the arbitrary ideas, opinions, assumptions, the illusions and imaginations.

Think of ‘wishful thinking’, in which we tend to see what we want to see, and also to believe it and to assume it to be true, thus losing our sober perspective. In this same way we also have the tendency to think that our ‘reality’, our ‘view’, and our ‘wisdom’ could be applicable to everyone and everything.

These things drag us along; they form a mental and emotional imprisonment, within the structures of arbitrariness and of the ‘night’. They are also the hidden inner sources of anger, criticism, bitterness, aggression, annoyance, fear of violence and struggle, waiting to be triggered.

Within this knowledge realm, there is no order ‘beyond’ to discover, just arbitrariness, and here humanity is trapped and driven, like mice in a treadmill: they are ‘lived’ rather than ‘living’.

Plato spoke in this regard: ‘When the night extends over things, the eyes seem to have lost their perception; when the soul is aimed at what lies in the half-darkness (what develops and passes) then it has no knowledge but only opinions (doxa). She becomes sighted (taken in by appearance), and seems to be deprived of all reason’.

The knowledge of the second kind, Reasonable Knowledge, however, is acquired by clear perception - there are no preconceived ideas, opinions, no reflections, or concepts that have been thought in advance. It is seeing things as they really are. Krishnamurti denoted this knowledge as ‘choiceless perceiving’. Through this, we read the Book of Nature, and breathe in the clear skies in which the world soul pours out her graceful and True melodies. However, we know that the conditioning of consciousness colours our observations, making them false, not clear; they will cloud your consciousness and delude and fool you without a guideline, in a labyrinth of confusion and contradiction.

How can a man shine his Light if he is confused? Nevertheless, doing this, holding this ‘choiceless awareness’, without judgement, we may clear ourselves of the tarnish, the encrusted calcified layers of delusion and false identification that have built up and cleaved to the soul.

The third kind of knowledge, Intuitive Knowledge, is that Knowledge, the Gnosis, which we cannot grasp intellectually, bright, clear, and in no way wrong in any circumstances. It is the knowledge that is not rational, and so does not need to be explained intellectually; its truth is immediately understood. It is the innermost Intellectual Love for God.

From the heart then, the glow of this true knowledge rises and ignites the Lights of the seven candlesticks in the head-sanctuary. This light radiates, in response to the powerful touch of the World Soul. This light, which is now ignited, is the winning light of the Christ.

To the extent that man understands what this Light accomplishes in our dark world, to that extent he will endeavour to cleanse the unwise knowledge that maintains the darkness.
The sun has just gone down and a beautiful red-purple colour illuminates the clouds high in the sky. The terrain is rocky with red coloured earth around long blades of grass and the occasional shrub. Behind me are the hills that I have been travelling through today. I stop and look around.

It is quiet and breathtakingly beautiful. I am alone in this vast landscape. Nobody comes here. Actually I should continue to walk but the tiredness in my legs and the beauty of the sunset make me yearn for a nice spot to sit and just look around me and rest. Yes, over there, that high rock of about three meters high, that is a beautiful place.

Well … here I am.

Isn’t it crazy how one decision can change your life like this. I take my backpack off my shoulders and put it down next to me. I take a sip of lukewarm water. Somewhere in the air a little bird warbles. It is becoming dark remarkably fast and - as I continue walking - I notice that I am beginning to get a bit worried about how long I still will have to walk through this vast plain. I had thought that the city would be closer to the hills. I think I’d better go and look for a place to sleep and curl up in my sleeping bag which is still tied under my backpack …

I get up and look around me again. Hey, is that a light over there? In the falling darkness I now see slightly to my right some little pinpricks of light becoming increasingly clearer, marking the outline of a city. Tomorrow I’ll be there, the thought flashes through me; tomorrow is the big day, the day to leave behind me the life I have led up till now. And I do not even know if I have the courage for it.

J. van Rijckenborgh:
“...it is now probably clear to you that there are two atmospheric fields. Not one here and another elsewhere, but existentially present at the same time, just as there are equally two electromagnetic fields existentially present. One state typifies the state of fall and grace, the state of patience and of helpfulness. The other state expresses absolutes and divinity.
Both conditions are present, at the same time, in the same space, here and now. One cannot designate where the sea of divine fullness-of-life is not present. The Kingdom of God and its life atmosphere is nearer than hands and feet, yes, it is within you. And the Great Ones who testify of this divine fullness-of-life say to us: ‘Behold, I am with you.’”

Master of the Stone

My friend …

If you read this you have found my report; my report on a question that changed my life completely: “What is the world asking of you?”
always, unto the end of your world? He is among you when you do not know. The living water is there, and you can drink freely. If you want to drink this water, if you want to live in that other atmosphere, you will have to leave this incidental world. Go, leave behind you all that you have and follow me!

Do you know how I got here? Last week I sat slumped listening in class to our mentor who had quite a speech about how important it was to make the right choice in the courses we will have to choose, because they determine your future, and things like that. You should know that I had fallen into a kind of stupor. You’ve probably had the same experience: it was hot that day and for one reason or another the sounds seemed to come from ever further away. I reclined a little further in my seat and my thoughts wandered along paths of the things the mentor said. I’m almost sure I would have fallen asleep if I had closed my eyes.

Sound bites like: “Important!”... My dreamy head was not able to cope. “Choice!”... Pfff, I thought. “Your future depends on it!”... I see the sweat on the forehead of our mentor slowly sliding down and see his mouth moving, but at the same time everything beats me... And crazily thinking... Many things I do are pastimes, more or less fun, exciting or boring. But they all feel like pastimes. As if I do things, waiting for something real, for something essential. And then, then I started thinking, really thinking...

J. van Rijckenborgh: However, to be able to leave the prison of your own occasional world, you have to become a Master of the Stone. You must lay the foundation stone for a new temple construction. But in order to be a master, you must first become a pupil, an apprentice temple builder. Here you, singled out because of your own experience, learned the nature of your natural prison, and did you discover that this world is also a place of grace? For the Gnosis does not desire your destruction. It wants to help you. Therefore, there is a Universal Brotherhood, which bridges the life atmosphere. It brings you something of the original living water, in different states, adapted to your state of being. The full jump across you cannot make and you do not need to make. There are brothers and sisters who help you forward at every step you would want to take, and who plant your foot every bridge which leads from your current state to the other side. Why then would there be anxiety and fear? There is no one who forces you to take a step that you are not able to. None of the Brothers want to force you. Stay on the stone on which you are standing, and if you have power for the next step you will be helped. That is why it is said: “Come to me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Seek and you shall find, knock and the door shall be opened unto you. There is only one condition to the Path: it is expected of you, to become an apprentice temple builder. Then you will undoubtedly one day be a Master of the Stone.

The sizzling heat makes the air vibrate above the ground. When I got up this morning, it had been so cold that I had woken me up: The town, my final goal, fortunately is already closer and visible. Just now I need to persevere, always taking the next step, and then I will be there tonight. You might be asking yourself what I’m doing here, and why I’m exhausting myself to reach that city? I should tell you: this city has something that attracts me irresistibly. You will not believe me, but the most important thing for me now is: a bridge.

The town runs a canyon, a gap of more than 1,400 meters deep, created by millions of years of river erosion, that seeks its way deep down, like a blue ribbon. The inhabitants of this city once constructed the bridge as a sign that you are leaving the civilized world behind when you leave the town and travel into the plains behind the canyon. It is also a tilting bridge with a contra weight - so that it is exactly balanced when it is open.

But if you put your foot on the bridge it literally collapses, step by step until it touches the ground when you reach the other side. Step off the bridge and it bounces back again, waiting for the next person to cross. The name of this bridge is: The bridge of no return. You can only cross this bridge if you are sure you want to leave the old behind and squarely meet the unknown. Do you know the feeling that you actually never really feel at home anywhere? Whatever the world seems to ask of me, I
There are brothers and sisters who help you forward at every step you would want to take, and who place your foot on the bridge which leads from your current state to the other side.

J. van Rijckenborgh:

What does this mean: to be an apprentice temple builder? It means that you are going to lay the foundation stone for a new temple construction, and that you will have to hew that first stone in the right way. May we teach you how to do this? Will then, take a piece of hard stone, i.e., place yourself before the harsh reality of basalt of your dialectic aimless existence. You then place yourself in front of this reality with the sharp chisel of your right focus and unwavering determination and carve into it with all your strength the stylized rose of the Cosmic Septenary. This stylized rose is from now on as a window in your prison, through which you are able to look outside. Through this rose Goethe’s Faust gazed. Through this rose Dante observed the Paradiso. Through this rose the apprentice temple builder looks with a clear eye. Through this window the apprentice breaks and chisels and hews the cross. He hews his Path, his way to liberation. In this sign he will overcome, just like Christian Rosycross.

I walk through the city. Occasionally people follow me with their eyes which is only natural. When you have been crossing the jungle for a week you will look a bit haggard. I grin a bit. My shoes are grey with a thick layer of dust. There are stains on my trousers and my hair is certainly a mess. Above a few buildings I see the first glimpse of the bridge. The evening sun shimmers on a silver structure. I turn a corner. In front of me there is a straight road with no houses which opens onto a small round
piazza. At the edge of the piazza the bridge rises high. Only now I realize how high it is, because I have to bend my neck all the way to see its top, pointing up high like a finger. Behind me I hear shuffling of feet. About a dozen people have stopped and are standing there watching me. "What do you intend to do?" A man asks. "Why are you looking at that bridge? You’re not going to tell me you want to cross it?"

I nod and walk towards the piazza. "You know that there is no return, you know that?" cries the man following me. It's so strange to be here at last. After all the things I’ve been thinking, after my decision, after my journey through the wilderness I can now actually touch the iron bridge.

I pick up my pen and write the final necessary lines in my report. They are not at the bottom but at the top: "my friend . . ."

I fold the sheets, put them in an envelope and slide it between the stones under the bridge. So that anyone can find it and read.

J. van Rijckenborgh:
Then he places his stone before the Gnosis and, while continuing on the path of self-dissolving, bringing his old world to an end, he evokes, with the sharp edge of his weapon, the four Holy Foods: IGNIS- the original hydrogen, FLAMMA- the oxygen of divine reality, MATERIA- the dual power of fulfilment, MATER - the moulding, the original carbon.

And then he puts his stone in the niche of realization, in the upper room of the master builders. What do you think will happen now?

The new atmosphere, the ancient spirit fire, seizes the pilgrim and descends on him, now that he, as an old picture portrays it, breaks through with his head and his staff through the sphere of dialectic illusion and beholds the reality of the stylized rose; now no more just a symbol but an inner possession, opening up before him as a reality. His system becomes a radioactive field of the Brotherhood. He enters the original magnetic field. By laying the foundation stone the flames of the spiritual fire are ignited and the apprentice temple builder becomes Master of the Stone."

My time has come. Now I’m going to prove to myself that my decision is genuine. Carefully I put my left foot on the first angled piece of the bridge towering high above me. For a moment, nothing happens. Then a shudder vibrates through the bridge and it tilts very, very slightly forward. Now I can take my right foot off the stones and stand fully on the bridge. And again the bridge bends down a little. The bridge is designed in such a way that you literally realize with every step what you’re doing. You have to put in an effort for each step - it is not automatically done. Only when you take a step will the bridge tilt further down. Deep, deep below me I see the blue of the river at the bottom of the gorge. For a moment my stomach seems to squirm and my legs seem to change into limp rubber. But my hands are still strong, I grab the railing and move another step forward, and the limp feeling disappears. You see, you just have to keep on going. Then suddenly I see the other side that was hidden from sight all the time by the bridge. I stand on the uttermost edge of the bridge. If I take one more step it will swing up behind me, waiting for a next person to cross. My desire is for freedom, truth, love, friendship, and to help - and I take the step.

All quotations are from the book "The Coming New Man" part 1, chapter XI "The rose of the sevenfold manifestation of God" by J. van Rijckenborgh

"Sky Ladder," a work of fire-art by Cai Guo-Qiang, lit on the 15th of June in the harbour of the island Huiyu, Quanzhou, Fujian (Japan). The artist thus symbolizes the connection between the Earth and the Universe.
I woke up from a congested dream, returned to myself, and in my hands, an ordinary earthen pot from which a frail stem with a small bud seemed to reach out to me.

I wanted to move the untimely gift immediately to the queue of the multitude clamouring for my attention but it was so insistent, so intrusive, like a self-explanatory answer to my own question that I could not bring myself to get rid of it. On the contrary, it was a presence that could not be ignored, inconvenient or not. A freshness that breathed through me with a joy I could barely contain, a joy which was more than the sum of all rejoicing that had ever been my share. A request - and at the same time an offer without any space for yes or no.

But the world demands its rights, and often more than is its due. And I followed meekly, many times, enchanted by the tinsel. But the call rustled again, barely audible; a beneficial pain in the womb of my mind. But every time I return to the inner sanctuary, reluctantly, freed, with bated breath. And every time I find the door wide open and a warm glow radiates towards me from a common earthen pot ... Like a never broken: Welcome!

I kneel before the bud, that has been entrusted to me for so long. The wonder flower will eventually break its fetters although there is no ‘where’ and no ‘when’. Someday I shall know...
An outward sign of an inward mystery

Because of the conviction that you are having all these thoughts, the thoughts become a private property and communicating with others soon becomes a perilous undertaking. Especially as we assume that what we think is really true. This conviction is inherent with having thoughts and being a thinker. Because everyone else thinks and thus has other “truths”, communication sometimes seems to be a secret negotiation with the aim to make your own truths acceptable to others, to convince each other in a battle of attack and defence. But just imagine what it would be like to communicate only on the basis of your heart. How would you do that? Just radiate wordlessly your deep feelings or your profound sense of being? Wouldn’t it then be like speaking of ‘my feelings and your feelings’ and ‘I feel like this and you feel it differently’?

In this regard a lot of communication problems relate to the three streams of your thinking, feeling and acting. And therefore they cannot be resolved within the conditioning of those three streams. Behind the impasse the crucial invitation to turn inwardly is hidden.

Turn into your heart, to the centre of your being, where your deepest feelings and desires are. Then turn even more inwardly, behind the heart centre, where the source of your essential being is flowing. The source is a powerful symbol of something unknowable. Connected to your physical heart and working behind each heartbeat, it is the centre of your elusive microcosm. It calls to you to be available, to open yourself to the inspiration that emanates from your core being and, in doing so, to leave the conditioning that dominates the three personality streams as it is.

How can you do this? How can you go beyond the constant and conditioned thinking and thus reach the flow of that other energy?

Almost immediately words and images like peace – silence – inner listening, pop up within us. But within the framework of the conditioned stream of thought and feeling, these words and images just conceal the truth. The poet Ed Hoornik writes in his poem “Having and Being”:

“The Soul is: Being
And is: listening
Retreating
To become a child again
That gazes at the stars
And that is slowly guided there”

Listening inwardly
In the school of Pythagoras, so the story
In its original form a symbol always works; inspiring and stimulating, it opens your soul for the spirit.

The Greek word 'symbolon' refers to a seal or coin broken in two. One part was endowed to the sender's messenger, and the receiver was in possession of the other part and so could verify its authenticity. The seal was only seemingly broken, sender and receiver stayed connected all the time (the two parts formed a whole in the end).

The distinction between sender and receiver was only temporary and outward. Whatever is imaged in a concrete symbol is always unity, universal truth. Similarly, the "Divine Sound" of Pythagoras is the truth that connects everything.

Even though an outward symbol - such as the pentagram - has a universal value, it only liberates in the observer what can be realised and is necessary within him. It is possible that the perceived value differs from the usual meaning that is given to it, because a symbol also always reveals an individual image, i.e. one's own inner experience. This is a meaning which is lived through and differs from those given by the intellect. Therefore, the meaning of a symbol cannot be bound or restrained; each time it is experienced as new.

While a symbol often says more than a thousand words, it also transmits something in a much more direct, intense way than a mental or verbal explanation. An outward indication can only truly contribute to an inner understanding to the extent that it resonates inwardly, in the way that it strikes you. Then, deep down, it really works!

In its original form a symbol therefore always works, inspiring and stimulating, it opens your soul for the spirit.

It invites you to live fully - to go beyond your outdated conditioning, beyond already dug channels of thinking, feeling and acting. We speak of course not about flags of nations and symbols for organizations or icons in smartphones, markings on packaging, ranks on uniforms, medals and advertising, but rather to ways to influence your subconscious, to manipulate you to respond to existing conditioning. An outward symbol is just an unmistakable picture, however, the inner symbol within is so subtle that it is hardly noticed. In addition to a revealing aspect, the symbol also contains a mystery.

Within the symbol transcendence and immanence are mutually prevailing. It is something that lights up as an inner understanding. It is exclusively for the 'I', because it only knows and acknowledges separateness and because it can only think in terms of duality.

In silent contemplation the universal Divine Sound, behind all the manifested diversity of individual voices, is inaudible for the 'I'.

Direct connection

Reaching this border a symbol can be a great help. Because symbols maintain a direct connection between the hidden Heart and the personal heart, they are an understandable truth. Similarly, the "Divine Sound" of Pythagoras is the truth that connects everything.

An outward sign of an inner mystery.

It is a spiritual development. You yourself can never follow your own life's route. Thus, it may also become clear to you that a physical symbol is not a talisman and does not automatically deliver a spiritual development. You yourself remain responsible for the development of your soul.

What is lasting harmony? It is the immediate ever new 'now'.

What is the most powerful thing in the world? That which precedes it: silence.

Infallible compass

And therefore the same symbol or image may have a different meaning for different people, and even have a different meaning for one person at different moments. You have your own infallible compass: on someone else's navigation screen you can never follow your own life's route.
What you are and the free will

According to International Law, autonomy means the authority for a country to pass its own laws. Spiritual independence is an important factor for the modern human being. We like to see ourselves as autonomous and independent because only in this way we can be independent and develop freely. But how independent are we in reality? And in addition to the questions about our independence and our free will, we have to face an even more fundamental question: What am I?

It is in the nature of a human being to see himself as the cause and center of all actions, as a creator, a 'maker' who has control. But what are you? And are you really? At first sight it seems to be clear what you are. You are always busy but often not aware of it. You may state: 'I am me, an established Ego that is separate from the others. The perception of my actions as well as the decisions are mine. Therefore I am an entity, a clearly distinguished something with special attributes and with a will to express them.'

But, 'who' you are in the context of your character, age, sex and the roles you fill in your life, does not nearly describe 'what' you are. Character traits can change over time as well as the roles you play in life. You are born and you die.

Thirst and hunger
You might ask yourself what you actually are? And if this is all there is? All these superficialities, all these changing factors? Where does 'being' even come from? Regardless if you believe in an existence after death or if you believe you won’t exist after you have died, you should ask yourselves what idea you have on this subject. Or in other words: what was in existence before you were able to say ‘I’? What was before the age of two, a time when you were not yet aware of your ‘I’? Back then you were nursed when you were hungry. You would simply start to suckle. The sucking reflex was just there in the moment. You were not aware of yourself or your surroundings. You didn’t experience time or space.

Later you learned to say ‘hungry’; and after that ‘Joey is hungry’, because you realized that you have a name. And later again, maybe after two or three years you learned to say: ‘I am hungry’. By now you had acquired a concept of your ‘I’ to which everyone else was reacting as well. The ‘I’ began to have a meaning for you. You could identify with it. You had already lived for a few years but now you slowly realized: this is ‘I’. Your surroundings confirmed this experience.

A further conditioning developed in the sense that ‘I’ is different from ‘You’. The opinions others have about you became important. Your cultural values and ideas about life were shaped by the influence of your parents and your education:

After a long search a man finds the door to God and knocks to gain entrance. A voice calls from behind the door: ‘Who is there?’ The man says: ‘It is me, Lord.’ The voice calls from behind the door: ‘Go away. There are too many here.’ The man goes away, filled with consternation that he is not allowed to enter after he has been on such a long spiritual path. Some time later he approaches the door to God again and knocks on it gingerly. The voice calls again: ‘Who is there?’ The man answers: ‘You, Lord.’ The voice replies: ‘The door is open. You were already inside. All the time you were knocking at the door from the inside.’

Rumi

A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT INDEPENDENCE FREELY INTERPRETED
became part of you. You were raised as a personality to fill all the relevant roles. And so you lost unnoticed the spontaneous feel for who you actually are. Therefore it is not surprising that for many of us questions about our personality arise at a later point in life. Moreover the ‘I’ assumes it is mostly in danger. Since the ‘I’ is a very limited and finite being, it raises self-doubt and uncertainty. Considerations about who you are now and who you might be after death don’t seem to make sense.

You experienced ‘being’ as a reality, but how real is it in truth? Do you really exist? How can you know that? How can you be so sure that you exist? At a certain moment you will realize that thinking cannot be the basis. Even though you experience your thinking as very real, you only think that you think. It only forms the fictional basis of your existence. It is only an assumed existence. Consequently there must be something, that perceives your life from without and that attempts to let you see your existence real, you only think that you think. It only

**Considerations about who you are now and who you might be after death don’t seem to make sense.**

**Recognized and known**

The essential ‘being’ can generally not be recognized or understood by the common consciousness of the mind. It reaches far beyond that. The essence is as a matter of fact too near for the conditioned personality to experience. This essence is free of time and space, similar to the free state of a baby, which is also an unconditional being, even if it is still in an unconditioned state. Every human being has the opportunity to find again – fully consciously - this free being. The only question is how to find it. The answer is as simple as it is incomprehensible for the common mind: It is the Other! And the Other has always been present. It is incomprehensible, because the condition of the unconditioned personality became disconnected from the ‘I’. The reality of the reality of the ‘I’, that you respect and identify with, is brought to light by the all-permeating, true inner being. When the belief in the reality of your self-image falters, an opening emerges and you will then recognize what you are not. When you can’t avoid the question any longer who you truly are, then you can begin to examine it for yourself. Suggestions of other people may also help you to gain (at least mentally, outside of your ‘I’) a broader image of your inner being.

It is obvious that an external help cannot form a state of dependence. Instead help should only point to your inner essence – your inner master. Although this inner being is not confined by a certain location, yet it forms a focal point, a soul nucleus that ensouls your personality. It is a soul-consciousness. In the same way a focal point or energy field forms if more people become open for their inner essence. In such an energy field your own soul can get even more in resonance with the inner essence.

**Natural responsibility**

The soul is a radiant glow, a light that shines between the essence and the personality and vivifies the person. You are life. This life can express itself freely in the personality; it ensouls the person. The natural responsibility originates within the soul. Now we could conclude that by becoming more open, the inner enslavement could manifest itself better to prepare for liberation. But it is the inner, not the outer influence that makes this possible. And at the same time it does not mean the liberation of the ego, but that you will be liberated from the ego!

**Free Will**

The question, if we are independent and possess a free will, could be answered with a ‘Yes’ as well as with a ‘No’. We certainly have the freedom to act within the relative. (Definition for ‘relative’: something dependent upon external conditions and the opposite to the absolute.) But how free is the ‘Relative’? Isn’t freedom bound to the relative and to everything that goes with it? The choice is always made on the grounds of the mental consciousness based on ideas, concepts and conditionings. In contrast to our true being is completely free and unconditioned; it is unchangeable, although paradoxically it always livens itself and is therefore always new. Therefore only the unconditioned soul consciousness can be free and perceive what is and what happens and truly ensoul a person. Without the tainted perspective of the personality, who is bound to perceive the reflections of life with his senses, the unconditioned soul-consciousness can see everything that happens. Pure consciousness. What you can do as a person is to just ‘be’ and recognize from deep within what the expression of life is at this moment. It is not about influencing the expression of life, but to be the expression of life itself. The personality acts and it cannot do anything else for that is the way it is made. However, you can see how the touched personality outside of the ‘I’ and its relative logic, perceives the pure impulse of consciousness which is a timeless and immediate being. This impulse causes a process of transformation in the Relative, though the transformation process of the relative personality is real and cannot be denied. Only from the perspective of the Absolute it is an illusion. What is remarkable is that the Absolute, the unknown expresses itself down into matter through a new revivification of the personality. So there is real freedom, though not within a conditioned personality. And only the conditioned personalities have the problems with the free will, because seen from the inner essence you are always free. The expression of the will is life itself, as an unconditional freedom and as unconditional love. It is what you are as a true, autonomous soul-conscious being. And above everything is the spirit, the pure Being it is a manifestation within a realm we would describe with the words ‘non-being’. For this is the quiet serene and hidden source of all being. This is your absolute being. And so autonomy and freedom are for everyone because autonomy and freedom are equivalent to the All-Oneness, to what you truly are.
Reflecting upon the mysterious words that one ‘should stay close to the vase in order to reveal its colours’, I honestly barely knew at the outset what it was about. Even though I had read in the hermetic writings of the Crater, the great Divine mixing vessel, or in the Jewish wisdom-literature of the breaking of ‘the vases’ or ‘the glass sea’ at the creation. When that vase was broken, was it too high or too far off and how could I stay close to it and reveal its colours? However, despite a draught of oblivion I must have caught a glimpse of its heavenly splendour. This world immediately lost its lustre because of it. Once, brightly coloured and richly decorated but now faded to ash grey and sharply contrasting black-and-white hues. Even though everything was done to fill that emptiness of existence, to give it nevertheless some colour, for example by befuddled people in drinking-bouts with stale wine.

The time for the best wine has yet to come, I thought, as in the Bible story of the wedding in Kana. And just as clear and silent sounded the appeal: ‘Get sober, you who have given yourself to intoxication and sleep regarding God.’ Disillusioned, I endured the raw emptiness of the existence in a sublunary/terrestrial world. Like the sick Fisher-King whose only relief from pain was a warm bath. Or like a fool of a knight of the grail wandering lonely through vales filled with deadly shadows. The search for the hidden vase led me on many detours. It rather looks more as if I was on the run from it, than on the road to get there. Also my participation in many academic competitions for cups ended in disillusionment. Presented as the highest to be reached, the trophies turned out to be only gilded tin. And in the meantime I let the other cup of suffering pass me by.

Vast panorama
But the call of that sublime vase to come nearer sounded ever louder and above everything else as the journey led me through an absolute low, whilst laboriously wading through the blood-red sea of passions.

Thirstily wandering through the barren desert of life, vainly knocking with my staff on the rocks of resistance. Only after my conclusion that the long sought grail-cup was not within my personal reach did I perceive in the far distance something like the border of a promised land, a holy land, the land of the grail. After all, all my desires were reaching out toward the Light of lights, calling up resistance of the dark forces through cups of poison. They took away my view of a vast panorama, far outside the borders of this nature. In the hope of liberation from these, I finally directed myself toward the light-giving vase, which was being reflected by a supernatural field of light into this lower nature. It was at that point that the advice to stay close to the vase was very helpful. Not distracted by anything, and not letting it out of my sight, it was always close by and yet at a distance. Although one

Marc Chagall. ‘Since each life inevitably leads to death, we need to colour it during our lifetime with our colours of love and hope’
would love to get a hold of it and never let it go. I learned to approach it cautiously, something is wrong with the tone. I remain stuck at the well-known procedures. I do not succeed in guiding it toward something new and unexpected, something that won’t let itself be slowed down by predictable thought patterns. That is why my story still misses ‘colour’ and only knows a linear interval of time. Instead of revealing the colours of the vase, in a language of light with letters of fire, and in that way will offer a view of the mighty and great event of salvation that encompasses all beings. For no other reason than that I have heard that this Age of Aquarius has begun for the entire world and humanity. This one pulls the old rug from underneath our feet and brings a total world revolution. Because of it everything can now be seen in its full richness of colours in a much larger perspective. Hasn’t the hermetic mixing vessel been sent down as a baptismal font to immerse the entire field of creation in it? Isn’t the spiritual font working in the middle of this earth as an energetic power, fluid, seven yellow colours for the consciousness, seven green colours for the workings of faith and hope, seven blue colours for the senses, seven indigo colours for the dynam-ic energy, and seven violet colours on the radiation field of deliverance. As she says in her booklet ‘the Golden Rosycross’ : ‘when we mix these seven times seven colours, these forty-nine rays, in the right manner, we obtain the colour white. Then we finally wear the perfect, immaculate, pure white garments, as the Holy language says,’ ‘out of the Blood of the Lamb’, the indication for the Radiation-fullness of the seven cooperating Foci of the Universal Chain. It is the Living Water of the Universal Gnosis.’ Thus the vase is no longer high and inaccessible, wherever we go, but very near. No longer hidden and difficult to find, but in full view, clearly and directly perceptible for everyone. All its gifts, the universal remedy, the panacea or the elixir of life or however it is termed - abundant and freely poured out to the benefit and healing of many. Giveaway This asks from us, that we do not keep anything for ourselves. Or that we keep our cup full of expectation only open at the top or even closed. No, they must be handed out to those around us - to anyone who asks for it. All that we receive is to be immediately given away and shared with all who draw from the same source - with those who just like us keep their eyes directed to the vase. In that encounter, old and seemingly hollow images receive a new interpretation. Worn out images with a multitude of dimensions get freshly coloured. Let us place some of these well-known images around the vase. Like the one of the man with the jar who shows the disciples the way to the upper hall, the wedding hall, for the joint service of the priestly love-sacrament. Like the celebration of the Last Supper, in the presence of the Master of the Grail, anointed with nard oil from an alabaster jar. And, after the washing of the feet, the one of the passing around of the chalice and the raising of the drinking cup. The vision of the holy vase and caught in it as a heavenly dew the seven drops of the glorified blood of the redeem-er. And dipped therein the serpent of the new conscious-ness, as the beloved apostle John is sometimes depict-ed, propagating that vase to the furthest remote corners. Inviting all of humanity to be taken up into the chain of the brotherhood of the higher evolution, together with all the liberated souls being led upward in a colourful interga-lactic tornado, to the universal Throne of the Light. 

Seemingly hollow sounding images receive a new content, worn out images are within a multitude of dimensions newly coloured.
Inhoud

The often uncontrollable Moselle River and other nearby waterways were crucial for Nicholas and his fellow villagers. Whoever wanted to travel or transfer merchandise was almost entirely delegated to the river; upstream to Trier, downstream to Koblenz, where a new world unfolded from the Rhine. Downstream people came through Cologne to the cities of The Netherlands: Arnhem, Nijmegen, Deventer, Zwolle, Utrecht, Leuven. Upstream it went to Mainz and Basle, and from there Italy beckoned: Milan, Padua, Ferrara, Florence and Rome. All these cities were pickets that would spatially border the life of this influential German thinker of the fifteenth century.

1. AT THE CROSSROAD OF TIMES

Cusanus compares the relationship between God and man to that between a money counterfeiter and a money-changer. He emphasizes the invisibility and the reservation of the coin counterfeiter on the one hand and the indispensability of the exchanger and the user who need to know the values of the currencies relative to each other. With completely unknown coins one cannot trade or buy anything on the market. In a similar way, man has a unique position. He determines the value of things and if he does not do that, the existence of what God has created remains lacking in useful value. These and similar subtle metaphors about the relationship between God and man...
of the ideal of poverty that the monasteries, in particular of the modern devotion, wanted to put forward. In a cartulary of a Carthusian monastery, we find an anec-
dote that in a festive visit Cusanus did not want to recognize his beautifully and lux-
uriously dressed sister Clara who also attended, because she ignored with her clothes ‘that she is of poor descent’. ‘A purely fictitious story’ , says the young researcher
who gives a PowerPoint presentation about the early years of the prelate, during our
visit to the home library. ‘It only serves to raise awareness of the proper compliance
with the monastic rules and to stress the fact that Cusanus was an exemplary monk’. He
pointed out another striking biographical fact where again money played a role in
the background. Cusanus devoted himself to the priesthood only in his 37th year,
while his younger brother John had taken that step long before him. Did he want
the relationship with the trading company of the family which he, as an elder son,
should lead, to be left open as long as possible? Did he maybe not want to give
away his inheritance rights? Or did he – a born diplomat – want to keep his hands
free with regard to church influence? The fact is that Cusa managed, posthumous-
ly, to donate the family fortune to found a hospital for the poor in his hometown.
Thirty-three old men from all positions: six of nobility, six of the clergy and 21 ‘ordinary’ citizens could be given shelter and care there. Now also giving care for
women, the Cusanus foundation still stands intact and in use after six centuries. The
white building with a monumental library with unique manuscripts is an iconic
symbol of the village. Nicolas himself never saw it. He died on August 11, 1464 in
Todi. His heart rests in the Cusanus foundation. His body was buried in the church
of San Pietro in Vincoli, Italy.

Education
After several years of study in Heidelberg, Nicholas went to Padua to study law,
mainly Church law. He completed his studies in 1423 as a doctor in canonical law.
In Padua, Nicholas made a lot of friends who later would gain significant ecclesiasti-
cal positions, such as the later popes Nicholas V and Pius II.
After Padua he went to Cologne to study theology and philosophy where he was
undoubtedly influenced by the widely respected philosopher Brabant Heymeric van
de Velde (Hemericus Campo 1395-1460) who lectured at Cologne. In the meantime
his thinking must have been affected by the coincidentia oppositorum, a standing
expression for the coincidence of the opposites. Simultaneously Cusanus gave lec-
tures in Cologne on Church Law, but in fact he went to Cologne with the underlying
intention to study the works of the versatile Catalan philosopher Ramon Lull. The
ideas of this colourful Catalan would later influence many of Cusanus’ activities as
a tireless peacemaker between Islam and Christianity. When he could not satisfy his
interest in Lull in Cologne, he went to Paris in 1428 where he made extracts of his
works.

Books
The study visit to Paris also satisfied his quiet additional wish to buy books on a
larger scale. For the same reasons he visited the northern French town of Laon, in
those days a centre of science and culture. Throughout his life, wherever he was, Cusanus purchased books and curious objects

THE NETHERLANDS

The church reforms advocated by the movement of the devotio moderna, found warm approval
from the ambitious reformer Cusanus. He is considered a friend and supporter of the movement
and it certainly not a coincidence that he gave the control of his hospital for the poor in Kues to
a Carthusian monastery and to a daughter convent of the movement at Windesheim. The examina-
tion of the documents now available, however, no longer gives support to the persistent assump-
tion that Nicholas was at school in Deventer at the ‘Brothers of the Common Life’.
The confusion comes from the bursa cusana, which was made available by will to Deventer
for the ‘needy students’ from the Middle Moselle region. The bursa cusana came into force in 1469
by proxy for Cusana had died some five years earlier. Biographers had assumed until then that
Cusa himself had been at school in Deventer and therefore encouraged others to do likewise.

*Also in modern writings there are communications or references from Cusa to The Netherlands,
for that one conclusion of the German author Harry Mulisch: Cusanus is a key figure in the work
of Mulisch. We cite from ‘Het woord bij de deel’ (The action followed by the word) from 1968:
‘This amazing cardinal - whose books even bear dialectical titles (…) introduced a mystical
dialectical concept in the fifteenth century, the coincidentia oppositorum: the coincidence of the
opposites’. (P. 113-114) Mulisch had been at Kues several times and was also a member of the
Cusanus circle. According to Marita Mathijisen, he saw Cusanus as a coincidence of the opposites
himself, because ‘with one leg he still stands in the metaphysical and occult Middle Ages and
with his other in the empirical science’.

Money
Reliable sources on the childhood of Cusanus are scarce. It is indisputable however
that he could rely on two major plus factors in his youth: money and educational
training. Money would play a specific and important role throughout his life, also as
a pictorial metaphor. Whoever enters his birthplace house with its robust architec-
tural elements, its numerous rooms plus library and the eye-catching coat of arms, can
draw the conclusion: father Hennen must have been a very rich merchant.

The ecclesiastical chroniclers of those days were apparently a little bit embarrassed
about it – a leading priest with great personal wealth, not at all fitting the image

were a specialty of the fifteenth-century philosopher Cusanus but it went broader.
Cusanus was also the inventor of the convex and concave lenses with which we still
perform eye corrections. At the same time, he was the designer of the Gregorian
calendar, which still applies today. And he was a most versatile scholar and diplomat.
It was not remarkable that his father Hennen Kryffts was a ship owner and merchant
but exceptional in those days was the fact that he paved the way so that his talented
son could study at the distant Heidelberg university at the early age of fifteen

Cusa post-
humously donated his family for-
tune to found a hospital for
the poor in Kues
in quantities. For the collector Cusanus, life was a permanent education, reading being an attitude of life. After that, things went quickly! Nicolas began to be recognised as a scientist but he felt that his future would not be shaped in a scientific environment. Twice he declined an offer to lecture at the famous Leuven University. His first success was that he could prove that the famous Donatio Constantini (2) was a fake. A second great scientific success had to wait for recognition since it remained concealed from the public for a century. Cusanus made a new design for the Julian calendar and submitted this for approval to the Basel Consilium in 1436: the was ‘The reparation calendarii’. It was not accepted directly but when his proposal was later reconsidered in the Ecclesiastical Council of Trent it was introduced in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII who immediately named it after himself: the Gregorian calendar, currently still in use. The calendar reformer himself had to make do with a sober stone souvenir on the bridge between Kues and Bern-Kastel.

Money and scientific education, as previously mentioned, were the pillars on which Nicolas based his life. But in psychological terms there was a gap. He was not of noble birth and socially but of modest origin. In that time you had to be of the nobility to become a bishop or higher. However, his intention that he wanted to acquire the cardinal hat and sit daily at the table with the great ones of the earth, is repeatedly expressed in his texts. Apparently, he had the need to address it repeatedly. This could indicate that he always felt an outsider, a price that geniuses often have to pay. As little as we know with certainty about the young years of Cusanus the sources tell us little. The birthplace of Nicolas de Cusa is in Bernkastel-Kues, a town in Rhineland-Palatinate where a museum is dedicated to the thinker Cusanus.

II. ON THE WORLD STAGE

As little as we know with certainty about the young years of Cusanus, the sources relate to his later life, his life in the spotlight of the world stage, are very comprehensive and accessible. Initially, Nicolas of Cusa seemed the ideal figure to make a career in the office of the Church of Rome. As the Pope’s ambassador he had often been successful in mediating in theological and political issues. However, on one of his many travels - while returning from an attempt to reconcile the Church of Constantinople with that of Rome – something significant occurred.

At the sight of the sea, ‘as a gift from above, of the father of the Light’, he had a decisive experience that influenced him for the rest of his life, which made him realise that the unity in any area whatsoever came before all the fragmentation.
It was as if Nicolas of Cusa was offered a new life program, a program that would continually echo in his later life and would bring forth all his remaining latent talents. On the one hand, the Dominican Cusanus was a seemingly conventional medieval church prelate and an intense pious mystic. On the other hand, he was a hermetic, the forerunner of Copernicus, and well-known for his ground breaking work in science and philosophy.

• Thus he precluded the heliocentric teachings of Copernicus by establishing that the earth was not the fixed centre of the Universe, as was assumed in the Middle Ages but that it moved through space itself.
• He was the first to produce a modern map of Central Europe, not only marking his own dwelling place on it but also the cultural area from which the new era would develop.
• He was also the inventor of hollow or concave lenses, which correct near-sightedness.

The Unnameable
But first and foremost Cusanus was a great thinker who instigated a new impetus at the moment when the time of the medieval Mystics was over. He was one of the first influential thinkers who took the sensorium perception of man seriously. Thanks to Cusanus, empiricism (3) made its timid entrance. He was also the first to change the medieval image of God by stating that God was so great that He was outside of His creation.

‘God cannot possibly stand outside of the creation’
was about the infinite being of God and he saw it as his task to outline the concept of infinity.

Currency Change

Cusanus compared the relationship between God and man with that between the money maker (God) and the money changer (a human), a profession that was becoming more and more important in view of the increasing economic traffic in his days and the rise of the cities. But also for the client, an efficient and correct money exchange was an extremely important skill. The intelligence that was necessary meant that you could exchange money well and usefully, otherwise you could not reach your destination because you had to go through a lot of currency zones! Cusanus emphasised the reticence of the money maker and the indispensability of humans that must determine the value of the coins (as mentioned previously).

Therefore, humanity has a unique position. If man does not determine the value of things, then what God has created remains without value. You can compare such an existence with coins of a completely foreign and unknown currency with which you cannot afford anything. The money changer must recognize the coins of many small territories. He must determine the value of the coins by size, number and weight. And... money of which you cannot determine the value, has lost all meaning?

Holy ignorance

In Cusanus’ views on world and humankind, a good person is someone who is 'humble, persevering and God-seeking'. The human soul carries the living image of God, and, according to him, man himself is a ‘small world’, a microcosm. Human cognition can only reach its completion in the union with God. In his writing De quaerendo Deum (About the Search for God) this is further elaborated for the God Seeker in his path of healing comparable to the well-known Jacob’s ladder in the Bible. The lower steps on that ladder is the sensory world, nature and the cosmos. This often contains loose, incoherent impressions. Then the step of the ladder in the Bible. Then the step of the ladder which sensory perceptions are crucial. We gained sensory experiences. We recognize much of his hermetic thinking in Eckhart, which were forbidden because of a papal ban. The cardinal from Kues must have recognized much of his hermetic thinking in Eckhart (8). He derived from Asclepius a new and for that time optimistic vision: ‘Man is a second God. As God is the creator of all spiritual entities and forms in nature, man is the creator of reasonable truths and artful forms’.

Seed of the new time

Cusanus shared his vision of man during his many travels as a diplomat and as a deputy of the pope. At the age of 31, he caused a sensation during a ruling at the Council of Basel. He was not yet a priest and acted as a lawyer for his regional colleague Ulrich von Manderscheid who had asked the council for a decision in an ecclesiastical dispute concerning a nomination. Nicolaus from Kues confronted the bishops and worldly leaders present with the following statement: ‘Since people are by nature free, any government, whether based on written laws, or embodied in a ruler, should only be in agreement and consent of those who are subject to it’ (9).

The dignitaries were surprised, and could hardly believe what they were hearing! Did the vineyard owner from Coesee speak thus?

Until then, medieval man had not been much more than an often silent pawn in a tight class-based society, a creature that merely bowed to the will of his monarch. Our man from the desolate Moselle village had to use all his natural authority to let his bold statement take effect. And... he was not laughed out of court! Time seemed rare for renewal. The humble subjects would become free persons with rights and duties. The seed for the new era of the Renaissance had been sown. This happened in Basel, in 1432.

The self-conscious Nicolaus would take the transition from his birthplace (estimated at 300 inhabitants, sixty families, now: 4600 inhabitants) to Heidelberg, to call himself Nicolaus of Cusa or Cusanus from that moment on, as the story tells us. That does not seem to be correct. Nicolaus had registered himself in Heidelberg as ‘Nicolaus, Cancer de Coesee’ and also used the lobsters in his weapon. Only in 1440 his friend, the famous Italian humanist Ennea Silvio Piccolomini started to call him Nicolaus Cusanus.
How profound is the thinking of Mani who teaches us that the souls of the dead, after dying, first travel to the moon in order to develop there to full maturity. The moon is the symbol of the soul, the sun is the symbol of the spirit. “When the moon (the soul) is full, it passes them on to the sun, the spirit, where they receive new life”.

The sun is the ancient symbol of the fountain of life and of the healing of humanity. The sun-wheel, also teaches us how the immovable and the movable can combine. The true art of life where the motionless axis is like the “immovable mover”. The sun is the light and the energy of the consciousness. It lights up the darkness and it is also a symbol of immortality and resurrection. Rising, shining brightly and then setting again also symbolizes the path of life of humanity. In alchemy the old image of the world, the sun turning around the earth, represents the alternation between rising and setting that keeps the transformation in constant movement. Immortal as it is, it is also the image of the immortal gold.

Christ as the sun of justice, enlightens the intellect. (Sol justitiae illustra nos:) “The sun of justice enlightens us” is the motto of Utrecht University. And we read in the Old Testament: “But for you who fear my name, the sun of justice shall rise and there will be healing under its wings”. Maleachi 4:2

Sol – sun – gold

Hildesgeist von Bingen, “The Angels Choir.” In her book Scivias, is sketched the way of liberation and is gives an impression of the origin and structure of the Universe.
Memories of a better future

Let the past rest, do not worry about tomorrow, live in the now. This sounds good. It’s a nice endeavor to take on life every day as it comes. But the now it is not without past and no future. Each moment is part of the time. Time does not stop. The memory can even be a perspective of the future.

The course of our life largely determines how we shall remember it later. At the same time, our memory partly determines how we regard our life. Life and memory balance each other out and cannot be separated. Our past experiences colour future events for us and rather often hinder our life in the present moment. Nevertheless, we still need them. Without the benefit of experience, we will not be able to develop ourselves and will not be able to stand firm in this world.

Life is sweet or harsh, the memories you gather in your life are sometimes heavy as lead and at other times light as a feather. Sometimes they are poured into concrete and other times they meander back and forth. They nestle in our brain, we feel them working in our blood and they leave their traces in our body. In short, they influence us greatly.

A human being gathers experiences in huge quantities. It is best to avoid contemplating this endlessly by asking yourself ‘why?’ Rather look at what you can do with it. Decide for yourself how your memories will grow into an experience that stays with you, one that will grow as you grow and will not hinder you.

In this way a memory may act as counsellor for our thoughts. Our thinking is our strongest talent and the mightiest weapon we possess, for our thoughts steer our actions and are often the instigators of our emotions. Our thinking can make us smaller when we fill our thoughts with jealousy, anger or fear, such as our fear for the unknown, our anxiety for what others may say about us, our worry about ourselves and the world around us. We may then follow the advice: ‘set a guard before your thoughts’ in order to put a halt to these thoughts. In which case you actually only make yourself small and insignificant and life a little less beautiful. Why not turn it around: open the windows, clean the windowpanes, look around you and observe the world. Your thoughts will then be larger for they focus on all the options open to you, such as the possibilities to love and the gift of trust. These kinds of thoughts make us larger. They open hearts, feed heads and incite us to be a brave human being. Everyone is capable of practicing this kind of openness.

Memories of a better future

Reliability

The origin of our thoughts lies more or less in the experiences that we have had and the sort of memories we make out of them. Memories are certainly not objective, they are just as unreliable as the experiences we have had. No experience is exactly the same for two participants or observers. What we see is influenced greatly by, for example, the framework of things that happened.
earlier in the day, by the point of view of the observer, by the reactions of other people present, or by our own background. We store these experiences in our memory storage bank which then does its own thing with it by turning it into a specific memory. Then that memory will expand or diminish through new experiences and events and will thus change. What does all this re-writing and reviewing mean for the reliability of our memories? And is it actually about reliability? Can memories even contradict themselves at specific moments and at the same time be ‘true’? These questions are central in the books of Douwe Draaisma, professor of the history of psychology. He gave his most recent book the title if my memory does not play me false, which is the motto of a well-known character of the Dutch cartoonist Marten Toonder. ‘Because’, he writes provocatively, ‘something that happened in our youth is often the result of something that happened later in our life. And maybe more often than we would like.’ We live in a dreamed ‘now’ and an imagined past and they are directly connected.

If we shine our light on our dream, then do we dream or are we being dreamed? It seems to us as if we dream ourselves because we shape our reality with regard to form and content. How does this process work? It all happens in our brain, in our so-called mind, via the program that we run in our head, our mindset. We do not - we cannot - objectively interpret our impressions and events via our senses for there is no real objectivity. We interpret it in a creative way for which we first decode our perceptions into references that fit into our (conservative) mindset. That is to say, we match them with what already resonates with our impression from the past and is thus recognized by us. After that we ‘load’ our daily life with what is available in our mindset and we call this ‘download’ our reality. But it is actually a creation, a dream-created present. Be that as it may, it is still a good thing that we ourselves are at the helm of this dream ship.

In daily practice however we use computers, the faster the better. Because of the introduction of the smartphone? Since its arrival experiences? According to the German memory-researcher Manfred Spitzer, we will forget more quickly. The more we use computers, the faster our memory will degenerate. Our development stagnates. Spitzer even talks of ‘digital dementia.’ Dementia is brain malfunction that radically alters memory, thus change. What does all this re-writing and reviewing mean for the reliability of our memories? And is it actually about reliability? Can memories even contradict themselves at specific moments and at the same time be ‘true’? These questions are central in the books of Douwe Draaisma, professor of the history of psychology. He gave his most recent book the title if my memory does not play me false, which is the motto of a well-known character of the Dutch cartoonist Marten Toonder. ‘Because’, he writes provocatively, ‘something that happened in our youth is often the result of something that happened later in our life. And maybe more often than we would like.’ We live in a dreamed ‘now’ and an imagined past and they are directly connected.

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lers our behaviour. Little is left of the person the patient once was. His or her life becomes incomprehensible and illusive. Past and present merge and sometimes it even seems that the future is already here. Time has become a substance which does not need its own space anymore because it has become indivisible and cannot be set up linearly. There seems to be no night or day anymore, no rhythm in which cause and effect play a role. Thoughts and memories are untraceable and they are in fact not important anymore. But to us, as long as we are led by our thoughts, they are certainly important – very important. Not the thoughts dwelling on things of the past for which you feel regret. Remorse is a rather pointless emotion, as Spinoza already pointed out in the 17th century. We feel remorse about things we did or did not do but you can never turn the clock back by regret. Just as time will not heal all wounds as the saying has it. But there are other entrances in our past, like feelings of nostalgia and melancholy or the results of a past experience. Go back to the places where you could dream, where you could experience your essence. The place maybe that influenced you in what you are today. Either real places or dreamed, virtual places. Then there may be recognition of an inner reality, an inner certainty.

Trust
A child is born within a microcosmic ‘home’, his own small world which carries within it a host of memories of past lives. The child grows, fed by the food that it is given, by its parents and by its surroundings. The child learns to think for himself, to make his own decisions; in fact, it learns to live. But from whom does it learn and by what means? The child does not do so all by itself. Learning originates in the things it experiences and in the experiences its microcosm had before and in the experiences of its parents and ancestors and of course in the country it lives in. And so forth and so on. If it is true that everything exists in relation to us and is furthermore coloured by the present – a dreamed present – then the circle is closed. Then it becomes possible to evaluate what has happened, what happens now and what will happen, consequently finding and using the truth in it. It is a huge confirmation of what we actually have always known deep down inside. It is knowledge from inside as well as an immense trust surpassing all outside knowledge. If and when we may truly be free is determined by how we live, what guidance we follow, who we want to be, what we want to do. Whatever experience we gain, in this trust we may travel on through a life that every person must shape for himself or herself. For even if we cannot choose every detail in our life it is certainly up to us to choose what we do with it. Each human determines for himself how he will remember his experiences and how he lets them influence him. Everyone sees the truth differently or sees a different part of it. Only together may we form the whole, like laying a jigsaw puzzle. Maybe that is the road to take in humanity’s search to solve the riddle of the universe and to find the answers to all the questions we have in this respect: why, whereto, wherefrom? It all starts with the yearning of our consciousness to find unity and true knowledge. Then our thinking will no longer be imprisoned in our memories but will find an ever-current present and a clear perspective of our life.
A paradox may be defined as an ‘apparent contradiction’. ‘Apparent’? In that case there must be a unity in it, too, supposedly on another level. A good example is the paradoxical statement in the Tao Te Ching: ‘Tao is eternally not-doing and still there is nothing that It does not do. Wu wei for a pupil means ‘doing the not-doing’.

A paradox is not a contradiction. In a contradiction, two opposites hinder each other in their flow. In a paradox, on the other hand, our consciousness is offered a possibility to develop and grow. As such a paradox is more like a question, an assignment, a loan. The word paradox has its origin in the Greek words ‘para’ (against) and ‘doxa’ (expectation). It is therefore something that goes against our expectations. In other words, it is a truth that wants to draw our attention to it by presenting its back to us. Thus, in a paradox is hidden a chance to learn something, for it is often our expectations (and convictions) that hinder us in our progress. The formula for happiness may therefore be given as H=R–E. Happiness = Reality – our Expectations.

The essence of the possibilities hidden in a paradox may be best expressed by the words of Albert Einstein: ‘We cannot solve the riddles in our life within the space where they originated; we need another Space in which to do that.’ (Einstein)

The formula for happiness may therefore be given as H=R–E. Happiness = Reality – our Expectations.

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A paradox may be a contradiction in a worldly sense but when we observe it more closely it will reveal an underlying potential for spiritual growth. In order to reach this level we must first move beyond our own personal opposites to a worldly unity for in that case the thesis would immediately call up an antithesis. No, the direction of the answer will point us to a transformation-through-unity. A transformation to a higher step in consciousness that will direct us to the crossing point of the lemniscate, where movement ceases, where there is peace and quiet. It is this peace that is the prerequisite for our conscious contemplation. Contemplation gives insight and insight is the first step through the open gate of the spiritual Middle Path. It is the path from becoming conscious to being Consciousness.

The paradox may be a contradiction in a worldly sense but when we observe it more closely it will reveal an underlying potential for spiritual growth. In order to reach this level we must first move beyond our own personal opposites. Life informs us via a paradox: ‘Here is an assignment for you – here is work for you to do’. But how do I go on from here? How do I read this riddle? How to arrange the pieces of this jigsaw puzzle? A paradox is all about a pair of opposites that are at the same time a unity on another level.

The lemniscate is a good pictorial example of this: a horizontal or vertical figure eight in which the opposite fields meet at the crossing point in the middle. It is Yin and Yang in an eternal exchange of energy. It is the dualistic continuous energy of action-reaction and this, as the Latin has it: ‘ad infinitum ad ultra’ which may be translated in two ways: ‘an eternal continuation’ or ‘on the way to eternity’. Another paradox.

The question must now be: ‘How can I use the paradoxes in my life to further inner growth? The first step is to maintain a certain distance and to observe. Keep observing from the vantage point of your consciousness with the question in mind: ’Which paradoxes regularly crop up in my life? And which question does Life put to me through them?’ The answer will certainly not be about a worldly unity for in that case the thesis would immediately call up an antithesis. No, the direction of the answer will point us to a transformation-through-unity. A transformation to a higher step in consciousness that will direct us to the crossing point of the lemniscate, where movement ceases, where there is peace and quiet. It is this peace that is the prerequisite for our conscious contemplation. Contemplation gives insight and insight is the first step through the open gate of the spiritual Middle Path. It is the path from becoming conscious to being Consciousness.

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Paradox
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