

Andreas Heertsch

# Spiritual Experience in Everyday Life



## **Spiritual Experience in Everyday Life**

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English translation edited by Jim Hemingway



# Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Introduction</b>   | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>1. Barbarossa or the Reality behind Everyday Events</b>      | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>2. Spiritual Experience in Everyday Life - An Invitation</b> | <b>13</b> |
| <b>3. The Abyss</b>   | <b>17</b> |
| “There is no evil” - said the evil                              | 21        |
| <b>4. Crossing the Point of No Return</b>                       | <b>25</b> |
| <b>5. Sensitivity and Stability</b>                             | <b>29</b> |
| <b>6. The Scientist’s Fear of Imagination</b>                   | <b>33</b> |
| Illumination of Spiritual Beings with my own Light              | 34        |
| What value do images have for supersensible cognition?          | 35        |
| <b>7. From Imagination to Inspiration</b>                       | <b>37</b> |
| Does it always have to be pictures?                             | 37        |
| <b>8. About Inspiration - Reading in the Book of Nature</b>     | <b>41</b> |
| Bringing about an Empty Consciousness                           | 42        |
| Inspiration and Truth   | 43        |
| <b>9. At the End of Absolute Truth</b>                          | <b>45</b> |
| About Intuition   | 45        |
| <b>10. Stages of Higher Knowledge</b>                           | <b>47</b> |
| Imagination   | 47        |
| Inspiration   | 48        |
| Intuition   | 49        |
| Four attitudes in Sense Experience                              | 50        |

|                             |           |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| <b>11. Epilogue</b>         | <b>53</b> |
| <b>Illustration Credits</b> | <b>55</b> |
| <b>References</b>           | <b>55</b> |
| <b>About the Author</b>     | <b>56</b> |

## Introduction

Most introductions are quite formal in style and prose; this one will be different. Andreas and I are separated by great distance – Switzerland and America – and by language – German and English. But we have one unusual thing in common. Both of us have a natural affinity for electrical technology which has grown significantly since the time we were children. We relished our contact with analog electronics well before all things digital came along over 40 years ago. Fascinated by the ‘fallen light’ that electricity provides, we built, tested and repaired a seemingly endless variety of electronic devices without any sort of formal education or training while our puzzled parents looked on, wondering where in their genetic makeup did this aptitude for electronics come from. As I grew older, I began to wonder about it too. Confronted with a problem or a task, I always instinctively seemed to know how to repair a complicated electronic device or how to build a new one. There were moments when I felt I was receiving support from unknown and invisible sources. Fortunately for me, I was also inspired to study English Literature while in college and beyond, thanks to a wonderful teacher during my final year in high school. I went on to teach literature and writing to teen-agers for a number of years. My students were as puzzled by my gift for working with technology as my parents were many years before. “Where did it all come from,” I asked myself, again and again, as I moved professionally back and forth between these two most different worlds.

In the spring of 2021, the Goetheanum, the center for the study of Anthroposophy Worldwide in Dornach, Switzerland, asked Andreas to represent the members of the Anthroposophical Society who wanted to create an on-line platform for their annual meeting. The Covid pandemic prevented such a gathering from taking place in public. This was not the first time that the staff at the Goetheanum had turned to Andreas for technical support. They also asked Andreas, a life-long Anthroposophist, to write a short history of his participation in the growth of the use of technology in the day-to-day affairs of the Goetheanum for the May, 2021 edition of the Society’s newsletter, *Anthroposophy Worldwide*. “I realize that I have to be an advocate for yet another group,” he wrote, namely those “helpful beings who will ensure that the 100% electronic AGM(Annual General Meeting) will not end in a technical disaster.” And then with a smile he added, “these spirits know full well: *sine me nihil!* Nothing happens without me!”

After reading this exclamation, I knew instantly that I had, for the first time in my life, found someone who knew about technology in many of the same ways that I am familiar with from the time I was a child. Not only that, but he was also aware of the support we were getting from the spirit world. And so I decided to write the staff at the Goetheanum and ask them for his e-mail address. I was hoping that he had written something else about the invisible beings that take such an interest in our work with electronics and digital technology. Andreas wrote back immediately and provided me with the story he had written about his experience with Barbarossa which was included in his book, *Geistige Erfahrung im Alltag* (Spiritual Experience in Everyday Life). When he found out that I had been a high school English teacher as well as a fellow life-long electronics enthusiast, he asked me if I might be willing to edit an English translation of his book. How could I refuse?

Editing the English translation of the German text that follows this introduction has not been an easy project. Not surprisingly, Andreas turned to computer software programs to translate his book into English. Such software works fairly well translating simple narrative, but not with the complex language that is needed to describe spiritual experience. Words and concepts like *Abgrund* (the Abyss) do not fare well in English. We think of the abyss in an ordinary way, as a deep place one looks into like the Grand Canyon in Arizona, but German speakers often use this word to describe a specific spiritual state that one encounters and falls into while grappling with the initial stages of one's spiritual development. On the other hand, English is particularly well suited to narrative exposition. Fortunately, Andreas has been able to provide both in this book, not only a profound look into spiritual experience and how to explore it in everyday life, but also a wealth of stories about his encounters with the invisible beings that surround us. The path to spiritual experience is not an easy one to follow, glued as we are to the knowledge of the material world that our five senses have provided us since birth. Andreas provides us with ways to expand our knowledge of the ordinary sense world that we confront every day. Although our path towards a spiritual understanding of this world will be unique and a challenge, the stories and the discussion that follow will provide some useful insights into how we might go about investigating the spiritual world that surrounds us during our waking life.

Jim Hemingway, November, 2021

## Barbarossa or The Reality behind Everyday Events

Sometimes the unexpected happens. Some years ago I went to the Great Hall in the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, to watch a performance of one of Rudolf Steiner's Mystery Plays, *The Soul's Probation*. I joined a large audience in the theatre that had just begun to quiet down before the curtain opened when an unexpected beeping sound, similar to the ones that are often generated by an alarm clock or a smart phone, came from one of the female patrons nearby. Startled as she was, the owner of the beeping device grabbed her coat pocket and disarmed it as rapidly as she could while her neighbors stirred somewhat politely in their seats. A quiet expectancy returned; the curtain was raised and the opening scene began to unfold. Suddenly, the electronic beeping erupted once again. Some turned in their seats; others, annoyed by this distraction, scowled politely and tried to concentrate on the performance. The flustered owner, embarrassed by the interruption, disabled the beeping device, and finally an attentive silence returned for the rest of the performance.

After the second beep, an unexpected verbal impression came to my mind – “why doesn’t anyone hear me?” Surprised and astonished by this question which came from a voice not my own, I held out my arm as if to provide a bench of sorts for the questioner to sit on to continue the conversation. Almost immediately a little man appeared and looked at me with wide, uncomprehending eyes. I tried to explain to him – “now is not the right time for you to call out and make such a disturbance!” Puzzled, the little one on my arm frowned and listened to my explanation. “We humans are watching an important play! It’s about how we can see the world you come from.” Grateful for my response, my unexpected visitor squinted his eyes and then – poof – he disappeared.

Those of us who know and value fairy tales would not be that surprised by my story. Invisible beings like the one that sat on my arm and want attention are not unfamiliar visitors from the world of spirit that surrounds the physical world we live in. The ‘little man,’ of course, does not exist in ways that are familiar to most of us, and my narration of this event is imaginative though nevertheless real. For the scientific mind well versed in ‘measure, number and weight,’ the reality of this story about the little man is hard to fathom. I have given words to my conversation with him that were not spoken aloud by either of us. Initially, my response to the beeps resembled that of my neighbors in the Great Hall that evening. I, too, was annoyed by the disruption and redoubled my effort to concentrate on the performance. But my interest and training in my work with Imagination took over unexpectedly, different as it is from the techniques of traditional scientific inquiry, and my conversation with this little troublemaker ensued. He was small and undistinguished because this was such a minor event, a momentary bother to only a few of us in the audience that night. But knowing the affinity that some of these invisible beings have for electronic devices, I was not surprised to hear and witness this disruption.

I have been immersed in mechanical and electronic technology for all of my life. I built an oscilloscope when I was a very young teen-ager and almost electrocuted myself when I turned it on, thanks to the high voltage used to light up the cathode ray tube that displays electrical os-

cillations much like the television sets that were made over 40 years ago. This event was one of many that led to a lifetime of meditative work that included my research into technology. Since then I have become aware of the invisible beings that occupy this sub-natural world of electricity who often provide both help and hindrance when I turn my attention to technical problems. I have a natural gift for working with technology. As my understanding of these elemental beings grew, seemingly magical events would often take place. Colleagues of mine would bring me their computers and describe the problems they were having with them. I would sit them down beside me, listen to their tales of woe, and then lay my hands on their electronic devices and plug them in. Much to their astonishment, my simple actions often fixed everything! Their computers lit up perfectly for reasons that I now understand much better than I did some years ago.

My understanding of these elemental beings that are attracted to my work with technology has grown over time. They were not always helpful. Sometimes they seemed to be in an ornery mood and obstructed my work. On one occasion I had just spent most of the day working on a complicated and extensive article on one of my research projects when my foot accidentally swiped the reset button on my computer which was under my desk. In an instant, all of my work was gone! I could almost hear the cackles of playful disapproval coming from my invisible associates. Once I got over the shock of losing all my data, I too had to laugh at what had just happened.

Sometimes the disapproval from the invisibles can be very destructive. In my professional work in cancer research over the last 40 years at Institut Hiscia in Arlesheim, Switzerland, I have been the primary researcher on the machine that mixes the juices gathered from mistletoe to produce Iscador. Indications for this technology were given by Rudolf Steiner in 1922, but it wasn't until the early 1970s that such a machine was built. Steiner indicated that the mistletoe, harvested separately in the summer and winter, needed to be mixed on a circular disk or plate, about one meter in diameter, that rotated at 10,000 rpm. Not until titanium became readily available was it possible to build such a machine that wouldn't fly apart and self-destruct. These two juices are mixed at the rim of the plate which rotates at very high speeds (approximately 1900 Km/h), the centrifugal force of which is roughly 55,000 times that of the earth's gravity. This machine runs very close to the limit of what is mechanically possible.

In the beginning, two machines were built, one for research purposes and one for production. As production demands grew, we discussed the possibility of building such a rotating plate out of glass and carbon fiber that might be safer to operate and more effective in mixing the juices of the mistletoe. One of the problems we faced was to find a way to seal the fiber in ways that would comply with existing food regulations, given the fact that Iscador is injected subcutaneously by those who use it therapeutically.

We found a company in a small village that had a lot of experience treating carbon fiber with a protective coating that met the right conditions for food handling. We loaded our new plastic disk, which weighed approximately 200 kg, into a truck and brought it to the fiber facility where it would be treated. One day before the coating on the disk was to be finished, the person in charge of this process called me to report that an unexpected phone call at a crucial moment in the application process had disrupted the drying of the coating, which now had to be removed by sanding the fiber and then re-applied. This ill-timed phone call created a six month delay and upset our schedule for testing the new device in what is known as the "spin pit" to be sure it will be able to survive the extreme rotational speeds.

For some time now I began to wonder if this unexpected delay was trying to tell me something... that this project was an ill-fated one that ought to be cancelled. However, despite my personal doubts, my colleagues involved in this project tried to encourage me to think otherwise. "Let it be," they advised. So I went ahead with the test and began the process of bringing the new rotating fiber plate in the spin pit up to speed, slowly at first, but then up to 12,000 rpm. The test stand was inside a steel chamber that protected us from any sort of injury should the rotating plate fly apart or explode. Three of us – the operator, the foreman and I – nervously watched the electronic display that showed the runout of the rotating disk and revealed any imbalances or unwanted vibrations as the rotational speed increased. At 9,000 rpm, the numbers on the readout suddenly got a lot worse. "Something has happened," our operator quietly announced. But at 10,500 rpm, the numbers on the display seem to indicate that all was well once again. But then at 11,250 rpm, just short of our 12,000 rpm goal, an ominous, rumbling sound was heard from the test pit, and the three of us jumped for cover behind a security wall. In the next few minutes this rumbling, briefly interrupted by some ghostly pauses, became loud, sinister booming sounds. Suddenly, an explosion rocked the steel testing chamber followed by an ominous silence. We gingerly opened the testing chamber and clouds of smoke billowed out.

"Should I call the fire department?" the foreman asked. "Yes," I responded, "we need to get the heat from the explosion out of the chamber." The fire chief arrived in short order and inspected the damage. But by now the smoke began to fill the building where we all work. Others, curious to see what happened, began to gather. The fire chief hunted around for some fire extinguishers, none of which could be found nearby. Searching the rest of our building, he returned with two carbon dioxide extinguishers and sprayed one of them into the smoking chamber. A cloud of white steam erupted from the enclosure, the sight of which reminded me of the Witch's kitchen in Goethe's *Faust*, where Mephistopheles and the witches exert their demonic power. Once the spray from the extinguishers warmed up, strange crackling sounds emerged from the testing chamber which prompted some curious onlookers to step forward and take a closer look. Suddenly, an explosion shook the building and a sizeable vortex of flame shot out of the enclosure. "Now the devil is out," I muttered to myself. The onlookers quickly pulled back from the blast; fortunately, no one was hurt. This was not the support I needed or wanted from the invisibles. What a mess we had created that now had to be cleaned up!

While traveling home that evening after the explosion, I had a momentary impression about the presence of the invisible beings in what had just happened. Stressed as I was about the accident, I disregarded this insight and kept on driving. "Not now," I said to myself, letting that opportunity pass. Later I realized I could have deepened this impression by addressing these beings more directly as I might have when I formulated the question that came from the little man in the Great Hall of the Goetheanum who sat on my arm some years ago. I should have heard him say "why don't **YOU** hear me?" which would have made my connection with him far more direct. And so I thought I would try to solve this question experimentally. I was inspired to do so when a friend of mine pressed a book into my hands which was titled *Karlik: Encounters with Elemental Beings*. It describes how the author, Ursula Burkhard, begins to befriend a dwarf which she explains can slip into a physical representation when needed to provide a focus for our attention. She describes how such a being has no need for a physical body to become present in our imaginative life. The clarity of her assumptions about these elemental beings made a strong impression on me, clear and insightful as they were in an almost scientific way. I decided to set up an experiment to test for the presence of these invisible beings. For some time now I knew

that these spirits often long for the presence of children. Young children, after all, have not yet learned the ways we teach them to see the world as we do as adults. Yvonne, my wife, had just started teaching music to first graders at a local school, and I thought I would let this invisible companion of mine, if he indeed existed, take part in these lessons. I decided to drive to a local toy store and buy some sort of a familiar physical representation of my invisible companion which I could give to Yvonne to accompany her in the classroom. I inwardly asked my companion what sort of representation would suit him. I pointed out a few dwarfs when I walked into the toy store... they look nice, I thought. No response. I poked around and found a number of gnomes in another corner of the store, one of which was quite expensive. "That's the one!" was his response. "OK," I grumbled to myself – "you sure have expensive tastes! I'll have to put this purchase on my advertising budget!"

I gave the gnome to Yvonne who brought it to her classroom where it sat quietly on a window sill. The plan was to see how long it would take before one of the children in her classroom noticed something unusual about the dwarf I had purchased. Two weeks went by, and then, suddenly, one of the children found him. "What's his name?" Yvonne asked. "Red Beard" was the response, a name that quickly transposed itself into Barbarossa, the red bearded giant of a man who is well known in German mythology from stories told about him for almost a thousand years. Soon all of the children recognized him much to their delight. And so did my question, borne out of my Imagination, get answered in such an unexpected way by the children in her classroom.

Some weeks later, Yvonne returned from her classroom, upset and unable to find her purse and keys. On the verge of calling the credit card companies to report her loss, I recommended that she might want to consult with Barbarossa and ask for his help.

"How do you that," she asked.

"Well, introduce yourself to him and ask him where you could find the missing keys and purse," I responded.

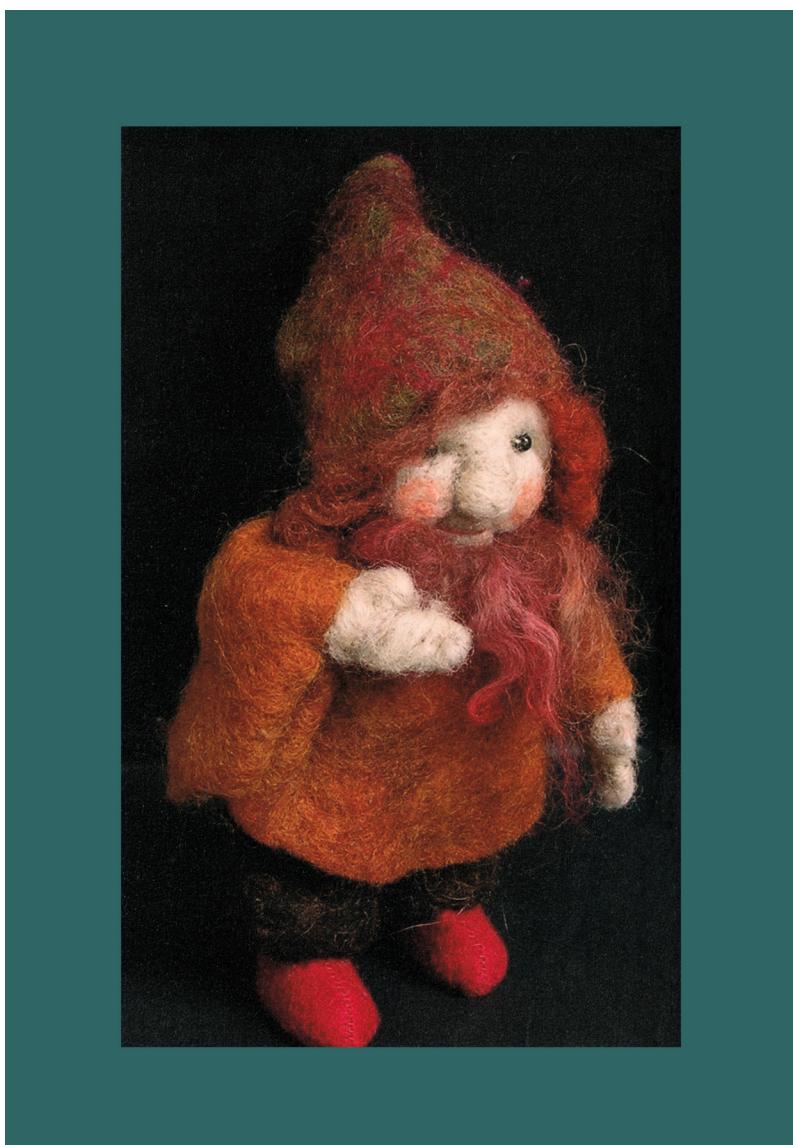
And she did. Nothing happened. But five minutes later, she suddenly remembered that she had stowed her keys and purse in her guitar case during her hasty departure from the school. A somewhat similar incident happened a short time later when she decided to put Barbarossa in a cloth bag and take him to another school where she also taught music to young children. It was cold and snowing when she left the school. Once outside she realized that she had left one of her winter gloves behind. Distraught, she ran back inside to her classroom to look for it but even with the help of the headmaster was unable to find the missing glove. Barbarossa was consulted once again; she laughed when the response came – "search the bag you put my representation in!" And there it was, her missing glove in the cloth bag quietly sitting on the seat of her car, ready to travel to a new classroom, ready to delight another group of curious children.

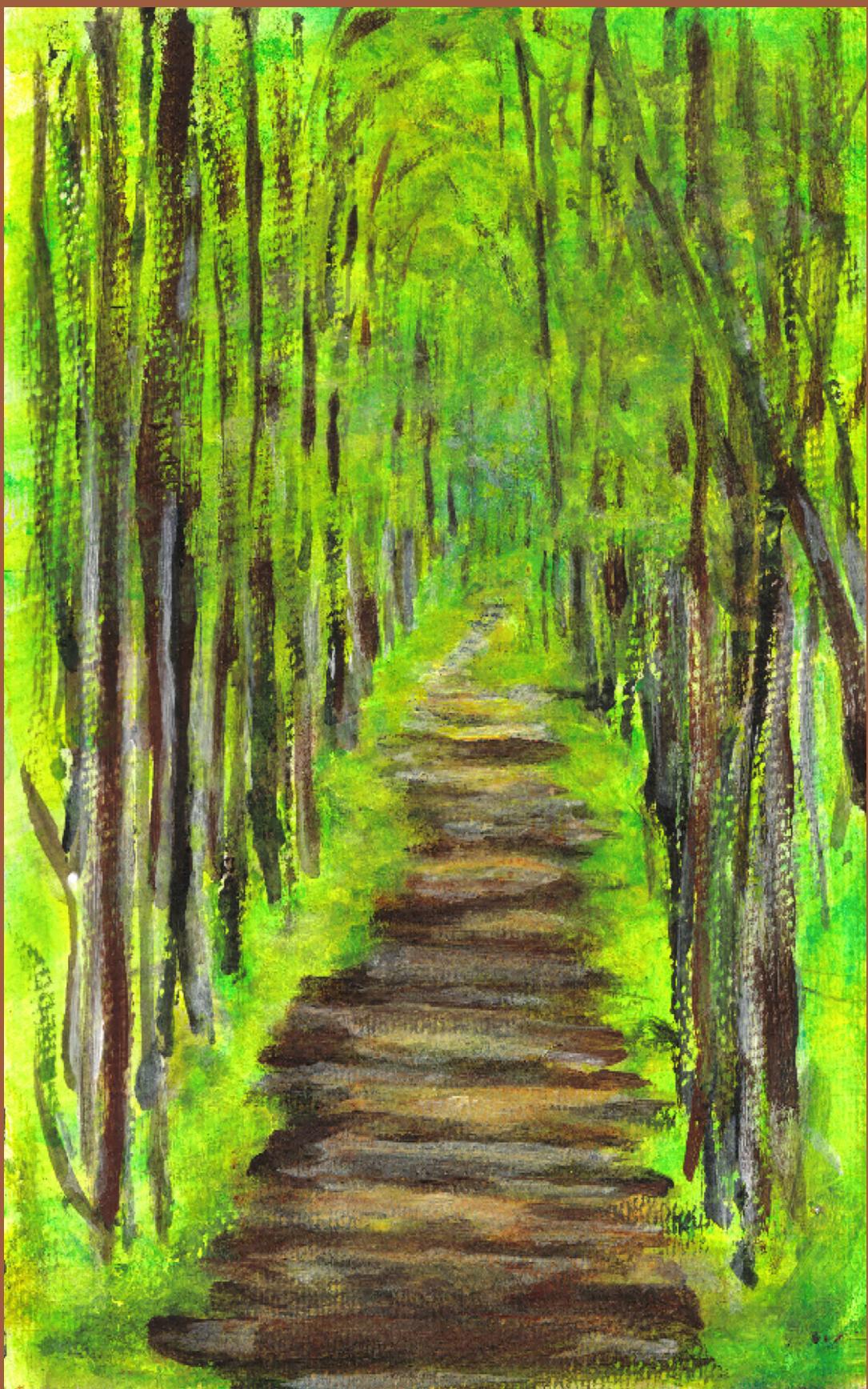
And so has Barbarossa reminded me of his frequent presence in my life from day to day. On one occasion I decided I should give a talk, a lecture perhaps, to my colleagues and friends about my invisible red bearded companion. Just at the moment I made that decision, I was holding a jar of oil that abruptly fell from my hand, hit the floor and broke into many pieces, creating a huge mess. "It's okay," I exclaimed, "I get the message. I've changed my mind; I won't say anything about you..."

Getting to know Barbarossa has been an interesting process. Again and again he reminds me of himself when something does not work out as I might have expected. He seems to put a lot of emphasis about being present in my consciousness. He gives me the impression that he

and his fellow spirits are dependent on people knowing about them and having some interest in working with them. Over time the obstructions, both great and small, that such invisible beings are able to bring into our lives slowly begin to melt away. The small wars and strings of bad luck I occasionally confront with technology seem to be over for the most part. Yet he can become a forceful presence especially when I make a mistake which can happen often. But over time, this collaboration, if I can call it that, has become much closer and more focused.

But there are setbacks even now from time to time. Recently I wanted to rebuild the control system for a new milling machine that we had just bought for our workshop. Tried to start it - short circuit!!! The electronics in the end stage of the controller burned out. I ordered replacement parts. When they arrived, they were the wrong ones! On the third repair attempt, the machine began to function somewhat. "Barbarossa, what chicanery is going on here!" I exclaimed. His response was full of accusations about the mistakes I had made in the way I have tried to install and repair this device. And so I decided to send the controller back to the manufacturer for repair. But when I turned my attention back to him once again, he had disappeared. Invisible he had become once again.





# Spiritual Experience in Everyday Life

## An Invitation

It is said that Rudolf Steiner once had a conversation with Herbert Hahn, one of the teachers at the first Waldorf School in Stuttgart, Germany, founded by Rudolf Steiner in 1919:

Herbert Hahn: Doctor, how should one imagine an angel?

Rudolf Steiner: Just imagine him somehow.

Herbert Hahn: But Doctor, it's difficult to imagine an angel in *any* way!

Rudolf Steiner: Dear Doctor Hahn, don't you believe that the angel will assist you in the right way?

\*\*\*\*\*

I would like to invite you to take a look at what I call a mature approach to spiritual experience, especially that experience which approaches a higher knowledge of Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition.

I do not mean the idealistic approach that often comes to us in adolescence. “When I grow up, I will do exercises and become an initiate!” Many of us have felt this way in our youth, and following such exercises often begins to make us wonder as we experiment with a variety of spiritual regimens whether such a goal is possible. A lifetime could pass while searching for the right spiritual formula. And so a more mature approach is needed once this transitional stage is past.

I don't mean that such youthful, idealistic pursuits should be avoided. But I do recommend that they mature and change as we age. Even if we start out on the wrong foot and are misguided by our first attempts, it is important to begin. If we are always ready for and open to change, any spiritual experience we have gained, whether helpful or not, will develop in promising ways.

I would like to offer you some practical insights on how to attain a higher level of knowledge of spiritual activity that can be found in everyday life, activity that involves the development of Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition that can be extended and deepened without any limits.

I am not a guru who offers you pre-packaged truths to follow. It is often said that those who leave the firm Castle of Understanding will soon discover that there are no absolute truths. Outside the castle one will forge unique spiritual experiences that often appear unexpectedly in everyday life. Mis-directions and bad luck can always occur, and it may take years to gain some insight, as I have, into the experiences I have had with my story about Barbarossa. But such experiences will come if one remains open to change.

There is also some difficult reading ahead. The path to higher knowledge is not easy to follow. What does follow may seem unusually disparate to most readers. I believe that the spiritual practitioner gets further if he or she knows how to search, while the theorist, captivated by preconceived notions, longs for experience that often seems to be of little use because it does not fit into an existing paradigm that is already known and followed. I wish to describe some of the actual supersensible experiences that I have had which are not merely imaginations of what I hoped to find in my pursuit of supersensible knowledge. I cannot provide an overview of all spiritual experiences which is something for greater minds to tackle. Instead, I want to describe how everyday life, with all of its trivialities and commonplaces, often offers the opportunity for deepening one's spiritual experience while at the same time providing a way to describe it in cognitive terms. Such a spiritual-scientific approach to life may not always be successful. The process of turning life experience into spiritual knowledge always requires course corrections and the willingness to make them like a ship at sea seeking to navigate unknown waters.

This is why my story shifts back and forth between the narrative of some of my personal experiences and my spiritual research into what they might mean. It would be easier to compose a detailed philosophical epistemology that leaves ordinary sense experience far behind, but I feel that it would be better to penetrate this world of the senses to find ways to convert it to supersensible experience through cognitive effort. After all, the world of the senses – the physical world – is the oldest of all worlds, a fertile playground not only for Mephistopheles but for others as well. Nevertheless, the development of this world that our senses can engage has a complexity to it that precedes all that has come before. It's not an easy task as I am reminded by Mephistopheles late in Part I of Goethe's Faust:

*If a God torments himself in six days  
And says to himself, Bravo, at last in praise,  
He must have made something clever.*

Any epistemological penetration of this world requires an investigation that cannot be easily made by natural science. Routine philosophical speculations will not be that useful. And so my approach to investigating the supersensible world may not be all that familiar to those who are curious about my discoveries. Dear reader, you are forewarned; this will not be an ordinary adventure.



## The Abyss

Most spiritual endeavor comes after a fall into the abyss. One may have the best intentions, forging ahead with a zeal that embraces all of the right thoughts and practices only to discover that such effort leads to an encounter with the abyss. Popular culture in the West often refers to moments like this as an existential or ‘mid-life’ crisis, but for someone on the path to spiritual development, the abyss is an unwelcome surprise. Even if one recognizes this moment while pursuing the proper exercises, this recognition does not make the next step any easier. One might ask: “Why do I feel worse now than I did when I first began to practice?”

Even though Rudolf Steiner emphasized that one should continue to practice the exercises he describes in *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* even if little progress seems to have been made, I do not think that this is always a good recommendation. Such a perseverance can lead one into waiting for the predicted result to happen rather than carefully observing what has taken place. Nothing that is expected to happen will actually take place as predicted, and one can torment oneself with a sense of failure and disappointment that can take many forms. After years of diligent spiritual exercises, one wonders from the depth of the abyss – “does the supersensible world consider me an unworthy candidate?”

It would not be unexpected to find oneself feeling worse off when the activity of spiritual practice produces results that are opposite to what was expected. At this point, self-deception can occur. One can become a caricature of an “anthroposophist” with a pat answer for every question, filled with a false sense of spiritual knowledge and accomplishment. One begins to play the part one wants to be rather than admit defeat.

There are ways to protect oneself from these unwelcome developments. While a student and a member of a philosophical study group, I was told by another member that the spiritual experiences I described could not be possible. Even though this member’s criticism was well presented at that time, his arguments ignored the fact that these experiences were real to me! Such arguments can provide a bulwark against those unanticipated and unpredictable events that come from floundering in the abyss. Personal security often demands such action. Nevertheless, it might be best to admit that one is afraid of supersensible experience. Working on this fear in the right way can develop the forces in one’s soul that are able to withstand future disturbances. Rudolf Steiner formulated such a response in one of his notebook entries:

*One should not want to renounce the drama of cognition  
in favor of a grammar of cognition,  
nor should one be deterred by fear,  
from falling into the abyss of the individual...*

In Rudolf Steiner's Mystery play, *The Guardian of the Threshold*, Lucifer proclaims "*those who flee from me, love me as well.*" The urge to flee from one's own abyss, unwelcome as it is, is not a sign of sovereign individuality asserting itself. Rather it is an expression of a successful self-deception which, considering all of the torments possible in the abyss, is not only understandable, but could be considered healthy self-protection. But such protection normally does not enter one's consciousness in the right way, leaving the soul unsuspectingly longing for supersensible experiences and eager to take on what comes next.

As the experience of the abyss deepens, it is often difficult to maintain a sufficient degree of steadfastness inside the familiar social environment within which one lives in a healthy and normal way. In *The Soul's Awakening*, Luna proclaims that "*the soul must never wish itself to fall; yet when it falls, it must draw wisdom from the fall.*" Superficially one might conclude that after seeing this situation through, one will rise again and continue. Even though one gains a knowledge of what has just happened, collecting such knowledge can become an insidious obstacle to escaping the abyss. Such knowledge can create a trap that feeds upon itself, preventing future forward development. The beasts one finds in the abyss do nurture themselves in this way and grow.

One often speaks of having fallen into a unique gorge within one's journey through the abyss. Every soul force has its own individual gorge. And there can be several of them, all different from each other. But the soul forces in the gorges or canyons of the abyss – the soul forces of thinking, feeling and willing – can emancipate themselves and become independent. One can try in vain to climb out of the canyons and ravines of the abyss by thinking, feeling or willing. And if one finds oneself in the midst of this struggle, one should assume that it would be helpful to look around intensively at what has happened in order to be able to report how the laws and conditions of this underworld work. Such a report could help others facing similar obstacles. This attitude, helpful as it might be, may seem at first glance to be a spiritual-scientific one, but it can also tempt one to form an attachment to this underworld of the abyss that triggers some dangerous personal side effects that were not originally intended. Unbiased observations about what has happened can provide some protection against a sort of madness, but they are not a way out. Such observations, noble as they might seem, can nourish the intensity of the fall into the abyss, as if one was being devoured by the beasts that dwell there.

There is no way back from an encounter with the abyss. One might think that one could simply retreat back the way one came. But one would discover that this hope is soon lost, because the consequences of one's deeds in the abyss can no longer be erased. One cannot make an innocent escape. The abyss is not a hidden, secluded niche in a quiet corner of one's life that can be easily avoided but takes place in the guilt-charged arena of everyday life.

The abyss cannot be overcome by simply walking through it. It does not have a dead end from which one can turn back but is instead a one-way street that leads one further into the darkness of human life. Some suggest that such a journey will eventually lead to the light which reminds one of the old saying, *per aspera ad astra* (through hardships to the stars), but this is unlikely to happen, leading one astray. With the light at one's back, the shadows deepen as one journeys further into the valleys and canyons of the abyss.

How does one rise, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of one's encounter with the abyss? One can escape when one discovers that the Johannine metanoeite (μετανοείτε: change your mind) does not mean: turn around and improve yourself, but to swing out of the abyss in one leap by transforming your consciousness (thinking, feeling and willing) by contemplating spiritual themes. One can at first be tempted to doubt, fear or hate these themes, even ones that seemingly make a mockery of spiritual science (feeling), let alone the doubts that could lead one to believe that anthroposophical research is ridiculous (thinking). One discovers within oneself a sea of contradictions that come from those actions that are already beyond what one would consider as normal (willing). Such fears become an assault on one's sense of self. One exclaims, "I am an outcast, unworthy!" One tries to fight such fears, but in doing so the fighter falls deeper and deeper into the canyons of the abyss.

It seems, finally, that the abyss must be overcome but not avoided. Figuratively speaking, one can imagine the presence of Michael and the picture of Saint George extending his hand in support, slaying the dragon with the tip of his lance. The beasts of the canyon will do their best to prevent this sight by providing tricks that can captivate the soul which undermine the basis for spiritual initiative. Like Baron Munchausen pulling himself and his horse out of the abysmal swamp by his hair, one can do likewise by exposing oneself to one's own faults and weaknesses while trying to climb out of the Slough of Despond like the protagonist in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Emerging from all the corrosive effects of the slough or the swamp, the attention one can now give to one's goals can release a new determination within, giving the soul balance and independence. No single prescription can be made to direct one in this move from the swamp of the abyss, but once done, the abyss loses its grasp upon the soul, which now can move forward with a newly found maturity.

*...because one rises from this abyss  
in association with many spirits.  
Thereby one is born from the spiritual world.  
Becomes himself annihilator of what has become,  
lives this spiritualized  
and is present in its destruction.*



## “There is no evil” – said the evil

How does one become consciously aware of spiritual beings? The expectation that these beings will make themselves known through readily available images will lead to disappointment, for images are at first more or less self-made. If I expect images of spiritual beings to appear, this expectation can usually only be satisfied if I actively surround these images with the mood that is generated by these images within me. But even if my consciousness is not able to form images in this way, having not practiced any imaginative exercises, I can still become aware of the effectiveness and presence of spiritual beings.

This can be demonstrated by a simple concentration exercise. Concentrate on a piece of matchwood in one's hand which somehow, for example, stimulates the recollection of the actions Greenpeace has taken concerning the destruction of trees which gives my matchwood observation an unexpected distraction. Can we observe how such a distraction occurs? I start by claiming that such a distractive recollection has never before been actually observed, for such a distraction is in fact an unobserved (unrecognized) element in my consciousness. Looking back I begin to notice that my will to concentrate on the matchwood is flagging and becomes replaced by something else... and suddenly I am no longer the master of myself. I am now possessed by someone else's will having to do with the story of Greenpeace which has wandered into my consciousness.

But how does this happen, the appearance of this foreign will in my thoughts? Where is it coming from, this will that introduces something into my thoughts that I do not want?

The nature of the “evil” described in this mundane exercise works by trying to remain hidden. Once it is recognized, its impact no longer has the same effect. I can now handle it, hopefully, some might think. It acts by hiding itself. It charts a mode of action that is not unlike an addiction which can be seductive and certainly deceptive. The next stage in this addictive disturbance reveals that I seem to have an abstract relationship to my own will. I realize something, but I still don't do it. The Apostle Paul treats this problem in Romans 15-20:

*My cognition does not keep pace with my doing. For I do not do what I want, but what I detest, that I do... Actually, it is not I myself who acts in this way, but it is the sin inherent in my being. And thus it is clear that in me, i.e. in my physical body, the good does not dwell. To want the good is given to me; to accomplish it is not. Not the good that I want, I do, but the evil that I do not want, I do. But if I do what I do not want, I am not the subject of my own actions, but the inherent power of sin.*

The story that follows comes from some of my experience with computers and electronics and reveals how such a distraction can turn into an addiction.

In my youth just after school, I had to prepare a software program to run a laboratory instrument. The year was 1972 when computer technology was at a very early stage of development. I often sat in front of the computer screen for close to 40 hours a week which did

not include all of the time I had previously spent thinking up the program. I often drove to the computer center in the afternoon to spend time trying to get the computer program to run properly. Countless number of times the computer processor in the center obstructed my efforts with a warning: ERROR or even worse FATAL ERROR. I searched the computer print-out looking for answers. "Ah! Found an error. What nonsense have I programmed!" I corrected the error; now the program will surely work. But it doesn't. Must be other errors. I search again. After much concentration and thought which is not unlike playing a chess match with a wily opponent, I find more errors. Now it will work! But no, the same error message appears; something else is wrong.

This goes on for hours. Hoping that the end to my troubles with the software is in sight, I forge ahead. Now the computer crashes, and the operating system must be reloaded into the machine. This takes up to two hours to complete. "Stupid machine!" I grumble to myself. Should I give up and drive home? I decide that it's worth staying if the reloading effort takes less than two hours... so I wait. I am in a room partially illuminated by the pale light of neon tubes and filled with the constant hum of ventilation fans. There are no windows in this room, let alone flowers. All that decorates my surroundings are whitewashed walls, a blackboard, a few plastic tables and twenty CRT computer screens. Others in this room look as washed out as the room itself with limp postures slumped over their work desks. Some of them are bearded, their haggard faces pale and hollowed out. And me? No better. I still don't have a beard. I do not notice that I see with only one eye, squinting outward as I peer into the computer screen. So I wait. But now I encounter the effect that all of this frustrating programming work has had on me. "Can't I solve this problem, trivial as it is?" I ask myself. "Try solving it this way much more elegantly," comes the response. Now the roles change; it appears that I have now become the machine and my efforts to work with it are beginning to program me! My intelligence appears to be swept up by this change. Although I don't want this to happen, I begin to wonder if it would be good to pursue what appears to be an elegant solution. It's a terrible idea; I don't want to go there, but I can't help being drawn to this possibility.

In the Middle Ages, one would have called this an obsession. "Ah, the computer is running once again!" The clatter of my fingers on the keyboard and those of all the other programmers in the room once again begins in earnest. With a few strokes, I test out my new problem-solving idea to see if it works. It doesn't. After two hours of additional testing there is still a quirk in the program. I rethink all the steps I have taken. "Yes, this must be the place where I have made the mistake!" Erratically, I make some new corrections which leads to yet more careless errors. When at last all of them are eliminated, a huge disappointment comes – the problem my programming was supposed to solve is not solvable at all! Frustrated and annoyed, I push my efforts aside. I have become a servant of this machine for hours. Nevertheless, I return to the bench and continue the programming work that I have needed to do to get this laboratory device to work properly. After an endless number of error corrections and changes I am able to bring my work to a provisional conclusion. What I don't know at the time is that all of my work on this project is in vain and will never be used in the future.

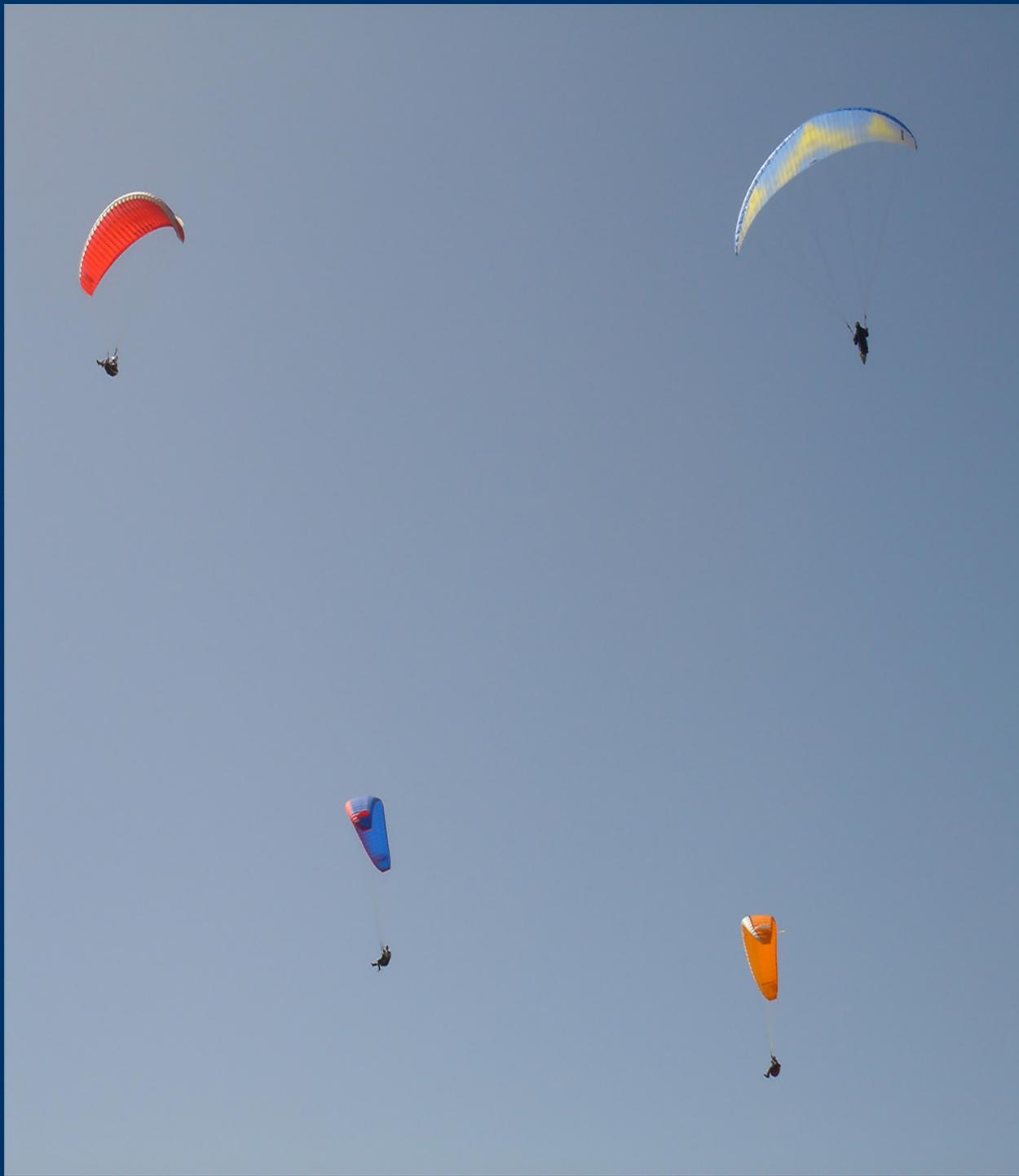
I have had enough. I feel hollowed out, restless and battered by this experience as if I had just made a long and stressful drive through heavy traffic on a rainy night. I pack up my things and say goodbye to the last of the lonely fighters in the computer room, the others having left long before. “Goodbye and good luck” I tell him as I depart. “Thanks...” He barely looks up from the screen in front of him. Early morning light surrounds me as I leave the center. At least this natural light that greets me is real. Once in the car and driving home, thoughts of the old, trivial, but unsolved problem come back to haunt me. There, then, unexpectedly, another idea comes to me. Is this the long, awaited solution? Should I go back? I am undecided but I continue to drive. I feel much too tired to turn around. But this obsessive preoccupation forces me to think – yes, that would probably work. I swear half aloud at the stupid computer that trapped and kept me up all night. Deep fatigue is all I now have to greet this obsession. This miserable problem gnaws at me until I cross the threshold of sleep. Now I can finally escape.

In this story, the effect of adverse spiritual beings is relatively easy to notice. These beings want to displace my consciousness with one of their own while keeping it hidden within me. If I do not fall for or become absorbed by this shift, I will be able to observe how effective they are. Doing so works like spreading holy water in medieval times over the mind and body, providing a cleansing that the devil is known to shun. I can then understand how the phrase, ‘there is no evil,’ provides the basis on which this evil can work. This denial of evil becomes the evil itself. In more contemporary terms, the word ‘evil’ can be replaced by ‘that which prevents me from acting in a sovereign manner.’

Another way of interpreting or investigating this phenomenon might involve a discussion of the influence of Lucifer and Ahriman. One is tempted by Lucifer to leave a more centered approach and wander into the realm of self-delusion, which seems harmless at first but proceeds, step by step, towards alienation. For Ahriman, the errors one makes and tries to correct, brings confusion into one’s conscious efforts, leading to a creation of an array of false facts that binds one more deeply to the earth.

The effect of good and supportive spiritual beings is much more difficult to notice because their influence strictly respects the sovereignty of the human being. It is easy to overlook their influence. If successful, one could say: “Golly, I didn’t think I was so good at this that I could produce such an accomplishment!” Such a feeling of accomplishment might be appropriate, but it can lead to a seductive sense of self-exultation. Instead, one might cultivate the feeling that something worked through me and gave me the opportunity to make things better. Supportive spiritual beings wait for such an internal initiative to come from me rather than take this initiative from me and distort it.

In conclusion, one can say that the bad acts as inhibitors of individual initiative and the good acts as reinforcers. Such inhibitions can lead one in the direction of addictive behavior or provide a challenge to grow and develop one’s personal sovereignty in a positive way.



## Crossing the Point of No Return

It is Saturday morning. I am standing at the foot of the Niesen at Lake Thun in the canton of Bern, Switzerland. The sun is shining somewhat shyly on the emerging peaks of Jungfrau, Eiger and Mönch, waking the valleys below from their nocturnal sleep.

I have never flown here before. That is why I wanted to join a group of students from my former gliding school. But no one is here at this moment. Have I come too early? The light that greets me this morning promises an exciting and hopefully not too dangerous adventure.

Why have I come? Is it just the longing for a challenge? Such a flight in the heavens could result in a serious and fatal crash. Do I really have to fly? Those close to me are worried about my intentions. But I was excited to have the chance to overcome my fears, to escape the familiar course of my life, to be closer to nature in my quest to arm myself with an umbrella in the form of a colorful paraglider. Was it the wonderful feeling that comes from those quiet moments when the thermals carry me upward towards the heavens above?

But fear was also a part of this attraction for flight. Just recently a pilot from Grindelwald fell to his death when he stumbled during his take-off. His glider, already caught by the wind, pulled him over the edge of the slope past the point of no return into the abyss below. My previous attempts at flight have led to some close calls of my own. At La Palma not long ago, I fell into a turbulent air current that carried me downward into a potentially deadly spiral, often referred to as a “clapper” by paragliders. It crushed the sail above me into a ball of fabric, which fortunately opened up before I hit the ground.

The flight students have just arrived! All of us now sit and wait for Micha, our flight instructor, where we have camped temporarily at the summit restaurant. We are waiting for the sun to warm up the ground and create the rising thermals that will enable us to fly. It is 11am and the time has now come for our adventure.

We set off for the launch site. First we climb to the summit of the Niesen to get a good look at our future landing site. “Do you see the highway over there?” asks our guide. To my eye it forms a thin double ribbon in the distance against the impressive backdrop of Lake Thun. There’s a row of houses, he points out, that still belongs to the town of Spiez. Next to this row, shaded in a lighter green, is a farmer’s cornfield. “Whoever lands on it will be shot at with buckshot!” he says. We all laugh nervously. Further away is a dark green field that will be our landing site with a well-positioned windsock to guide us. “You’ll see it when you get closer,” he advises. I am unable to make out the landing site in the distance, and I wander about beneath the high-tension wires and the chairlift cables overhead. Moments later, I ask for more details about the landing site which should help me recognize it from the sky.

Then we descend to our launch site. We disperse momentarily to look for a place to unfurl our paragliders. At this point personal responsibility takes over. If we don’t carefully arrange the rope lines from our gliders, the launch will fail. Such a failure would force us to climb uphill to the starting point, heavily dressed as we are with our helmets, lugging our 20kg gliders up the steep slope. Any undetected faults or knots in our ropes would severely restrict the maneuverability of the glider which would make the flight a very dangerous one.

Now the time has come. Some of our group furtively make an “Angstbiseli” (fear piss). I have spread out my glider and have carefully laid out all the lines on the ground. I put on my harness in which I will be sitting while airborne and have checked that it is secure. I now stand at the top of the slope with the lines I use for steerage in my hands.

All that is left now is to take off. With thirty lines of rope behind me, a ‘throw-over’ can quickly happen once I begin the run down the slope. The lines can become entangled, compromising the safety of my flight. I look back for a moment to check but see nothing of that sort. And if the lines become tied in a knot when the glider is pulled up by the wind, then what? “Yes, they often do,” I remind myself. I think and hope that this time they will not form such a knot. At this moment, my neighbor to the left of where I stand is launching. My concerns are relieved temporarily as he makes his run. I lower my arms a bit to ease the tension. Now he has taken off and is well away from the edge of the slope. I look down the path before me – it is steep! Not a good place to stumble and fall. There, just 10 meters away, is the point of no return, before which I can abort the launch if I am not in the air by then.

Nothing prevents me from launching at this moment. Maybe the wind now in my face could be a little bit better. It appears to be coming too much from the side. It seems such a simple decision. All I have to do is to take a few steps, lean forward and push hard against the glider sail behind me... and fly! I know! But I have not taken the first few steps. And so I stand there and nothing happens, facing the unknown and the abyss below me, the wind fanning my face with my mind racing with all the “what ifs” and “buts” that could happen. I am caught in a sea of thought, facing the point of no return just below me. If I was younger, I might have said to myself, “well, when I grow up, then I’ll be more ready... but now?”

But that doesn’t help. I am still standing there on the crest of the slope. The conditions are OK: harness is checked; all is well. The wind is not too strong, and in front of me the airspace is free and clear. So? I abandon the churning in my head. I only think: NOW! I bend forward and start the run down the slope. There is a rustling of the fabric behind me; the rope lines press against my hands, and I can feel the glider fill with air. Now it is above me; the run downhill has become faster and easier. Two more steps to the point of no return. As I start the final sprint, I pull on the brake lines and check upwards. Has the glider opened evenly? Yes, it looks good! I release the brakes and go. I step into the void at the edge of the cliff. The glider pulls me up into the air. Instinctively, my feet still pace in the air as the wind blows calmly and lifts me 6-7 meters above the slope below. I step into my foot belt and pull the seat under my gear. Finally, I breathe a sigh of relief; the take-off is successful!

Now it is time to fly. I turn to the left to stay close to the slope where the rising thermals are most likely to be found. I listen to my vario, the electronic instrument I carry, that beeps reassuringly when I am climbing and growls when I am falling which it is now doing at an alarming rate. If it continues to growl, I may have to start the landing approach to Spiez prematurely.

I see a small cloud a short distance away, just a bit above me, that is just beginning to form where the warm air rises beneath it. Should I approach it? The downdraft I am currently in will probably increase should I make this move toward the cloud, and that might cause me to lose too much altitude. I think to myself: “he who does not put himself in danger will perish in it! So start flying!” I pull on my right brake line and obediently my glider turns toward the cloud.

Sure enough, my sink rate increases. Uh-oh! Micha told us about a house on the slope below which marks an alternative landing approach if we fall to the height of this structure. “Otherwise,” he said, “you will have to land somewhere in the pampas.” Well, I don’t have much altitude left to work with – I could probably fly three circles and that would be it. But hurray! The little cloud keeps its promise; my glider tips forward; I quickly pull on the lines for the brakes, for otherwise my glider would collapse on me. Then I dive into the thermal. The growl from my vario turns into a joyful beeping. We are climbing! I center my glider in the thermal because there will be a ring of descending air around it. I work to remain centered under the forming cloud. Fortunately, it is so small that I can dare to fly into it. I am flying alone high in the late morning light. My colleagues have not been able to hold on and have already begun their landing approach.

Oops! Now my cloud has disappeared and my vario is growling vigorously as I fall. I spy another group of clouds which happily welcomes my glider and me as if we were all heavenly children. Not only do we want to play with them, but these clouds want to play with us! Suddenly, they drop us, and we circle around once again from behind, and the clouds lift us a little higher until they move apart and we sink. Another quick maneuver and the clouds pull us up once again.

Amusing as this encounter is with the clouds, my will comes to the fore. “No, we won’t let you go! You will have to take us with you!” We are now already 100 meters above the summit of Niesen, and hikers are watching us from the summit plateau. Finally, my glider and I say goodbye to our little group of clouds and we proudly fly two laps of honor over the heads of the hikers. I wave to them with my legs and begin the long flight to the landing site. Now I can relax.. I lean back and let the glider go while enjoying the beautiful view of the sunlit peaks and the deep blue of the lake below.

Where is that landing site? I fly towards the highway and look for the gliders who have already landed. From their position on the ground I can deduce the direction of the wind. What a relief! Then I begin to circle over the landing site to reduce my altitude. There is already a ‘Bise,’ a localized north wind, which keeps pushing me away from the landing site. Now I have to estimate the altitude accurately in order to start the landing approach at the right moment. At an altitude of about 90 meters, my counter-approach begins with the wind at my back, followed by a brief cross approach, then the fall to the ground.

But down here in the field, the wind is much weaker than it was above! I am much too high up off the ground to make my descent in this weakening breeze! Too late! I have already reached the end of the landing field and the row of houses that border it, but I am still 10 meters above the site which does not give me enough room to make another full circle. There is no other way to land! I have to make a partial 180 degree turn which doesn’t help, and the tailwind forces me to land uphill at a rate faster than I can run. And so I promptly fall over in front of everyone when I finally touch the ground. Not a problem, of course, except for the quiet laughter that I suspect comes from my fellow flight students who are amused by this Icarus just arrived who dances with the clouds.



## Sensitivity and Stability

For my son's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, we went on a desert hike in Lapland (Finland). This adventure was a challenge for both of us, given how different we are. We had already used up most of our rations within a few days during a tour of Lemmenjoki, and so we had to return to a more populated area a short time later.

Once newly provisioned, which substantially increased the weight of the loads on our backs, we continued our journey a bit more to the south into Saariselkä. This area is particularly untouched by human activity, and we ventured into unmarked territory where we had to trust GPS to guide us to some of the cabins where we could shelter for the night. We were now far from civilization in a place where the natural world can become increasingly intense.

Previously, we had hidden some of our heavier supplies in a woodpile next to one of the cabins on our route. Now some distance away from our place of storage, I set out early one morning to retrieve part of the equipment and supplies. My son stayed behind and took this opportunity to rest and sleep. On the way back, heavily loaded, I stopped to rest and sat down for a moment on my backpack. Tired as I was, I decided to open myself up to the natural world. I was hoping to get closer to the elemental beings that I felt must inhabit this primeval site that surrounded me. I imagined that a trove of friendly elves and gnomes might soon appear.

Once my mind and body came to a much-needed rest, something completely unexpected happened. Behind me where I sat, some strange, oversized, coarse figures began to make their presence felt. Folktale readers might be inclined to call them giants. They were, however, much taller than me and ill-tempered, and I quickly realized that they had it in for me. "Now we finally have one of those 'Murksters,'" I thought they said in a language that felt more like a grumble than recognizable speech. What I thought they meant by 'murkster' was 'environment destroyer,' a term that may not have been as clear to them as it was to me. It now appeared that they had finally caught up with one of those human beings they blamed for destroying their natural domain. They seemed ready to go after me and at the very least give me a thorough beating, if not worse.

Although I was sure they wanted to do something to me, I knew they would not succeed because, unlike them, I possessed a physical body that they could not touch. And so I was not afraid of them. But I could not close myself off from their displeasure because, given my professional work with technology, I knew that I was a part of the human social fabric that often thinks and acts in ways that often contribute to the destruction of their world.

It was not easy for me to respond to this unexpected and threatening disturbance. I tried to tell them that human beings were passing through a stage of consciousness that would lead eventually to a new way of living and working with the natural world and with them. Both annoyed and astonished by my response, my strange elemental visitors abruptly vanished.

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And so what can be learned from this story? What part of this experience can be useful to examine and in what way?

First of all, it requires preparation. My long walks in the wilderness create the possibility of such an encounter. In order to engage the environment in this way, I need to come to a mostly completed rest. The autopilot chatter in my head (the Buddhists call it ‘monkey talk’) that flushes up all sorts of thoughts and feelings as I live and walk each day must be turned off, unimportant as it is. I must not fight to turn it off, for that would give it a new weight, but must calmly look past it and let it quietly recede. I make a decision – now is the moment to open myself to my surroundings! Once accomplished, I can begin to question what has just happened. “Who is there?” I can ask myself, and then a certain presence can arise which will express itself with some unexpected images even though I might have previously thought that some bliss-filled notions about the natural world would come from my restful pause in this remote place. I need to find a way for these images to appear without any intellectual preconceptions. If they are pale and indistinct, I can try and enhance them with images of my own. It is not the content in the images that matters, but rather what they express from within.

When such an experience occurs, with supersensible training two aspects can emerge and play a special role from what is learned – sensitivity and stability. These two seem at first to oppose each other. If one is stable, one can appear to be insensitive; if one is extremely sensitive, one might react hysterically. Whoever wishes to acquire supersensible experience through inner training must constantly keep both of these aspects in mind. As one’s sensitivity grows, an ever-deepening sense of stability must also develop within one as well.

As noted above, encounters with the abyss can be very destabilizing at first, but when such experiences are overcome, they can bring an additional measure of stability. Nevertheless, one can also cultivate stability by practicing a group of six subsidiary exercises which Anthroposophy has identified:

1. concentration
2. exercise of will
3. impartiality
4. positivity
5. serenity
6. balance of these exercises

Detailed presentations of these exercises can be found in Anthroposophical literature. When one cultivates these exercises, they can present varying degrees of difficulty for different people. For example, exercise of will seems to be rather easy for most women to do on a daily basis than it is for men, who find it difficult to perform an insignificant action at the same time every day. But the concentration exercise – thinking every day about an insignificant object of little interest for a few minutes – seems to be easier for men than for women. For example, I limited myself to concentrating on an ordinary spoon every day for a ten-year period. When I stopped this exercise, concentration weaknesses in my approach to thinking promptly set in.

Properly practiced, these exercises can produce a stronger sense of self and personal sovereignty. With this effort comes a strengthening stability. Without such a development, I would caution against those exercises that strengthen sensitivity. Those who flood themselves with images can wind up in psychiatry when they feel that they are becoming haunted by those invisible beings that appear to come from the images generated by these sensitivity exercises. In the popular culture of today, most horror movies love to cultivate such fears that come from a mind that lacks any sort of stability.

Sensitivity training can also benefit from rigorous exercise. '*Mens sana in corpore sano*' as the saying goes; a healthy mind needs a healthy body. I have often felt that anthroposophists minimize the importance of sport which involves rigorous physical training like running or cycling. Such exercise can put one in the moment in ways that enable sensitivity and stability to flourish. That may be why I became so open to the elementals when I stopped for a moment to rest while carrying a heavy load on my back in the middle of the Lapland wilderness.



## The Scientist's Fear of Imagination

The story I told about the little man who sat on my arm while I was in the Great Hall of the Goetheanum waiting for Rudolf Steiner's Mystery drama to start could easily be misunderstood. It is an imaginative narration. Not that the 'little man' didn't exist; he did sit on my arm, but he had no weight as such and was completely invisible. For some readers my description would not be all that surprising or unusual, but not so for someone with a scientific cast of mind. Some further explanation is needed.

After the second series of beeps, I shifted from being annoyed like others around me to having an impression that came in the form of a question from the disrupter – "Hello! Why does no one hear me?" – consisting of spoken words that form a linguistic expression that enables me to communicate with you, the reader. Nothing, of course, could be heard out loud. Such an expression could have taken a different form as well, a visual one, perhaps, like the waving of a red flag to get attention. This shift from annoyance to impression surprised me, unexpected as it was. I imagined the little troublemaker sitting on my arm and the conversation I had with him that followed. Because I saw it as a minor incident of little significance, I imagined him as a 'little man' rather than a giant. My mood shifted from annoyance to an attentive listening and then to gratitude when the little man accepted my explanation. Such changes in mood foster projections that nourish the sources for the imagination to create images and narrative that are not to be taken literally but which provide an opportunity to discover the meaning that lies behind them.

At this point, a finely tuned inner perception is needed to distinguish between projection and impression. The scientist, by contrast, would be quick to doubt whether this distinction can be made at all. A scientist might argue: how can one find anything 'real' in this situation? But such a prejudice prevents one from having any experience other than what the scientifically rational observer would prescribe. It is not the scientific method that I find lacking here, but rather some of the prejudice that comes with it. In the course of my study of physics at the University, I learned that only the objective world can be taken into account, that is, objective facts that lie outside of one's consciousness. But I find this proposition to be unjustified because inner events can also be facts that arise from sources that have the same type of evidence as outer, 'objective' ones. It takes a more developed consciousness to distinguish between self-made pictures (projections) and those that are perceived (images) as well as those that lie between what is created and what is perceived.

A little exercise might help bring some clarity to this debate. A prime number is one that is only divisible by itself and 1. Number 2 is the only even prime number that exists,

for it, too, is divisible by itself and 1. Not so for 4 and all the other even numbers, none of which are prime numbers. Try to think of 4 with the same conviction as one would with a prime number and observe how the thinking experience is different, accompanied as it is by the insight that this notion about the number 4 is false. Consequently, one has two thought experiences in parallel, both of which are different – one is ‘true’ and one is arbitrary. Similarly, one can imagine a physical spoon seen with the eye and an imagined spoon visualized in the imagination. If one can cultivate an inner impartiality about these two seemingly conflicting observations, one can begin to cultivate the criterion to distinguish between impression and projection. Such a recognition is not an easy talent to develop, since most impressions are clouded by conventional prejudices and so do not receive adequate appreciation. These prejudices are often strengthened by the all too familiar expression – “Oh, it’s all just in your imagination...”

Impression, strengthened by inspiration, often stood at the beginning of the process that provided me with the ability to notice the ‘little man’ who set off the annoying beeps just before the performance began that night on the stage of the Goetheanum. With the help of imagination, I created a picture story or a set of images to clothe him, images that surprised me in the way they brought him into my mind. This process was not unlike the Goethean way of creating an ‘exact imagination’ when the soul is called upon to imprint the resulting impression with an image that both fits and illuminates the impression.

## **Illumination of Spiritual Beings with my own Light**

And so how does one imagine an angel? In the first stages of spiritual development, I had to learn how to sense impressions, most of which are usually so weak that I am used to ignoring them while I wait for the ‘real’ or expected impressions to appear. Doing so often prevents me from discovering the next steps of development.

But if I can become aware of these weak impressions that appear in the background of my mind, I need to learn how to catch them. If I try to analyze them with my normal consciousness, they can slip away. The trick to solving this problem is to use pictures to amplify them. If I become aware of the presence of normally invisible beings, like angels or elementals for example, I can clothe them with my imagination in an appropriate way. Having done so, I know that such a dressing is one that I alone have made. If I have the feeling that such efforts are inadequate, I can try to improve them, for this feeling initially points to a reality beyond these images.

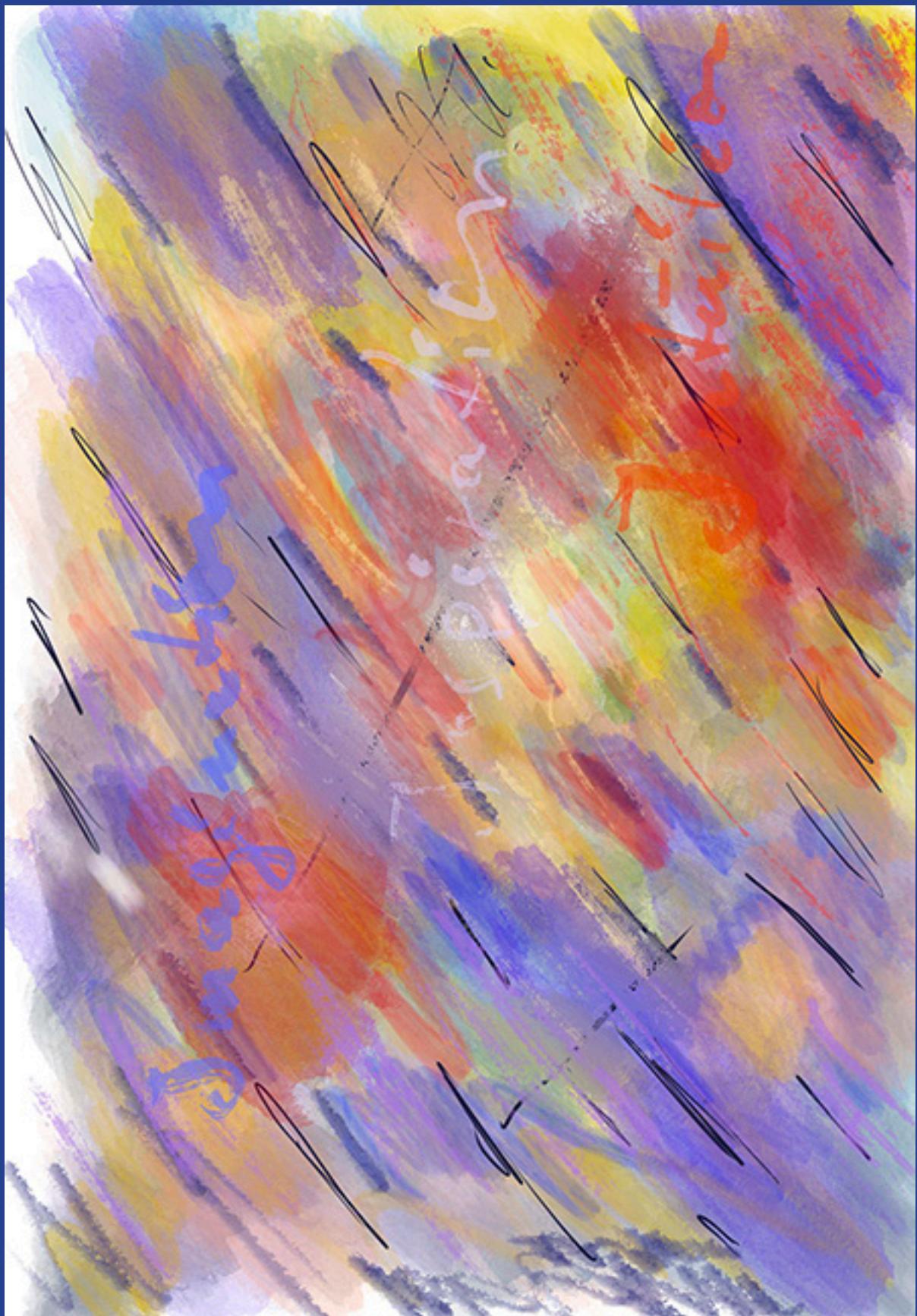
Such improvement exercises help to develop the ability of the imagination to create pictures of the invisible. Over time these imaginations will grow and become closer to spiritual reality.

However, there is a common misunderstanding that can come from such imaginations. One can expect an imagination to become a visual impression automatically without any real personal involvement in the process. But this is wrong, for I am actively producing these pictures, and if I have trained myself properly, I will be able to produce these pictures exactly once I am able to connect the process for building these pictures to spiritual reality. Goethe called this process “*Exakte Phantasie*” (exact phantasy) which needs to be learned as well as nurtured.

## **What value do images have for supersensible cognition?**

While it was still valid to say in the time described by the Old Testament – *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image* – in our time moods of the soul can hardly be grasped at first without the use of images. Supersensible experiences need images to make us aware of them, for otherwise they will flit too quickly over the background of the soul and disappear. In supersensible experience the initial connection between sense and image (Imagination) is not readily apparent. The soul can expose itself to images and from that point search for the sense that can be associated with them, or it can try to condense the sense, which initially appears as a mood, through images.

The understanding of the sense that underlies image making can be thought of in a spiritual-scientific way. Given the fact that scientists rarely entertain this possibility is not because these experiences do not occur to them, but that they take place rather inconspicuously in the background of the soul and thus do not pass through the intellectual filter normally applied to the more familiar grammar of conventional knowledge. And so the soul often finds itself faced with a contradiction. On the one hand it longs for supersensible experience, and on the other it has been exposed to those effective defense mechanisms that protect it from embracing these experiences. This protection is often quite justified, because the soul must have enough psychic stability to prevent the loss of its integrity. In other words, without the Guardian of the Threshold preventing the soul from entering unprepared into spiritual experiences, the soul would face a certain danger if it were to merge with the processes and beings of the spiritual world for which it was unprepared. Instead of refining its unique identity, it could surrender itself to foreign influences and fall into a dependency that would eventually have to be treated with psychiatry.



## From Imagination to Inspiration

The focus of a meditation exercise must be determined in advance. The meditator can turn to a spiritual being nearby, a guardian angel, perhaps, and ask for guidance for how to conduct the meditation in the right way, hoping that such guidance will appear when needed as the meditation unfolds. This might appear to be an unusual gesture, perhaps, for it would be like asking the picture generated by the meditation to take over this function. One could assume that spiritual beings, once they are aware of someone trying to make this connection, will adjust themselves to this development and provide some guidance. However, such guidance needs to occur at the beginning of the meditative process and be followed by a justification at a later time. Such a justification can come once the meditator continues to live with the created images in order to see how they change over the course of time and reveal the extent to which they prove themselves in ordinary life experience.

Although following this procedure produces images that appear in the soul without much effort, the question arises whether the soul is really able to cope with the images that appear. This concern for such inner development touches on questions of a psychological and psychiatric nature. It should be emphasized once again that psychotically disposed people in whom such image making can become uncontrollable should be kept away from such procedures and remain distant from any imaginative training. But it is also important to realize that any sensitization of the soul is a prerequisite for being touched by and working with the supersensible world.

There are exercises recommended by Rudolf Steiner which, with constant practice over time, may well produce results. These exercises can be roughly divided into picture meditations (e.g. the seed meditation) and verbal ones (e.g. Im Lichte lebet Weisheit - wisdom lives in the light). While the picture meditations strengthen imaginative ability, the verbal ones, especially those that are not intended to create pictures, support inspirational activity.

### Does it always have to be pictures?

At this point I would like to point out that a desire to create images in meditative work is a common and familiar preference. In the chapter 'The Scientist's Fear of Imagination' noted above, I suggested that one avoid the second commandment *Thou shalt*

*not make unto Thee any graven image* and add to it with ‘but if you don’t need one, do without it!’ Reliance on the preference for pictures tempts practitioners to think that if I don’t get a picture of some sort of a being, my work with meditation is not real. This is not true most of the time. We often assume that something we can see and touch is what is real in the world of the senses. But there are, of course, exceptions. If the stimuli of the ordinary sense world falls away, the reality of what lies beyond is by no means lost.

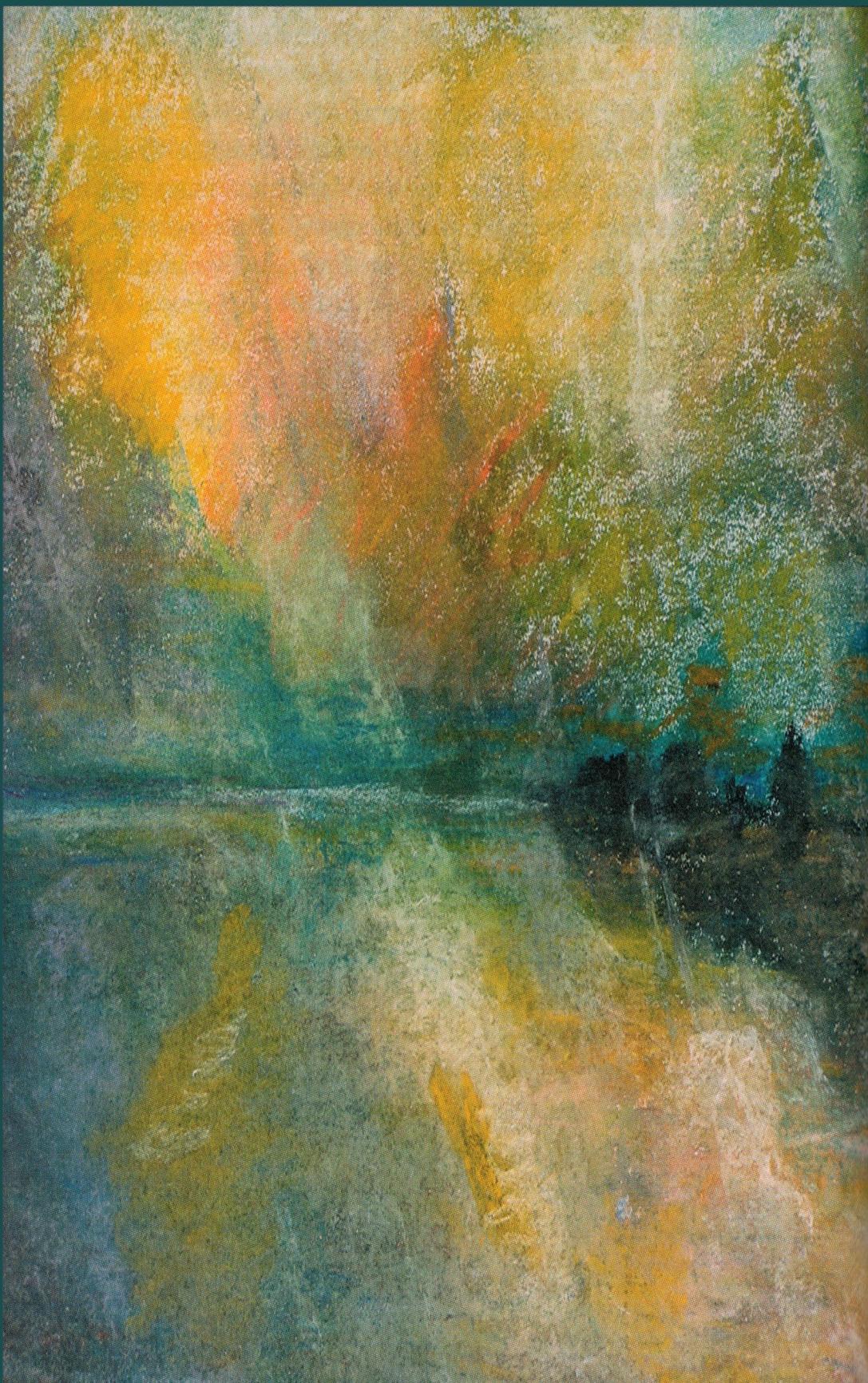
The same distinction exists in the supersensible. Not every being in this world of the supersensible can or wants to appear in the world of images or in the ethereal world. Nevertheless, knowledge about such beings can still occur. Such an experience can come with the feeling of ‘presence.’ Even in the everyday world, one can often have the feeling that someone is nearby without seeing or hearing them. This image-less feeling can be developed and refined in the supersensible where I can sense the presence of another being and can, with growing practice, know who this being is.

As in the sense world, one can separate the difference between what one seeks and the endless variety of impressions that come in ordinary life. In this world of the senses, I can make choices from all that appears before me that concentrate on the task at hand similar to using a viewfinder on a camera. Such attention provides a filter to someone who wants, for example, to loosen a screw in a kitchen cabinet but has no screwdriver. In the search for something suitable, everything nearby is considered as a possible solution, that is, everything that is seen that might be capable of turning a screw. In that moment, the clumsier solutions are quickly dropped, and anything that is sharp with a blade comes to the foreground. A singular choice is made; I pick up a suitable knife, a potato peeling one perhaps, and continue.

In the supersensible world such attention works in a more fundamental way. It comes with a kind of call that proclaims what I want to reach. Most often something always comes. The depth of the encounter depends on the intensity of this call and on the conditions that surround the call. Two components illustrate the intensity of this call:

- My will-filled intensity: is this encounter an existential one for me or is it more or less just a good opportunity?
- My mental clarity: do I actually or sufficiently know whom or what I mean? If it’s unclear to me what I am asking for, I cannot expect that any response will help me all that much.

A meditation text or picture can also have a direct effect on the attention that one pays to the intensity of this call. Such attention, however, is much more directed than those made in the sense world. With the physical eye one can see everything that is visible; a mental eye, however, must first be created for each new topic. Answers to questions can then appear with greater clarity.



## About Inspiration - Reading in the Book of Nature

Initially the spiritual study of images and imaginations might begin somewhat naively, but future work must include criteria that throws light on the value and the content of these images. Now would be the time to enhance the quality of this experience by bringing Inspiration to bear on this process.

Every picture has a frame. Through such a frame the picture becomes a picture. All pictures depict a subject that makes it stand out against the environment that surrounds it. We emphasize this feature by framing our pictures. Even pictures that are abstract without a well-defined subject are pictures of something; the physical materials they are composed of have no meaning in and of themselves. Only restorers and art scholars are interested in the material with which a picture is made, but viewers have a different experience and are impressed by what they see. The frame that surrounds the picture provides a contrast as well as a line of separation from what surrounds it. Such a frame peels the picture out of and away from its surroundings.

What applies to a painting can also be extended to other artistic genres. For example, a concert performance serves as a frame to lift the music out of everyday life. The impact of such a musical performance depends on my attitude, provided I am able to create an image for the sound that reaches my ear, framing the attention I give it which lifts the performance out of the commonplace. If I am ready to focus my attention, it becomes a picture. But if my attention only wanders over the surface of the picture, its meaning will remain hidden to me. This is why 'imaginings' are not cognitions but rather challenges to follow in the search for meaning. In a way images are questions and the frames that surround them are question marks. Once recognized, they are like writing that wants to be read.

Whoever reads a book looks at the letters one reads but does not concentrate on the peculiarity of the letters on the page but seeks to discover what is meant. A closer look at this process reveals that reading, in its truest sense, separates one from the bookmarks and printed letters on the page which, in a way, form a frame around the meaning that the words are trying to convey. A reader will not pay any special attention to the fact that the text is printed with an unusual font or that the paragraphs after the subheadings have no indentations. Comprehension will be greatly hindered if one reads and examines the printed text in this way. Noticing the serifs will interrupt the flow of reading if close attention is paid to the typeface itself. And so the reader has to put away what his eyes see on the page in order to find the meaning within.

The same is true for listeners of music. I do not listen to the specific pitch of the notes or the timbre of the voice, for such attention would prevent me from understanding what I am hearing. Even focusing on the language that is spoken does not matter. I seek an understanding of the experience of listening to music by what is meant and not by concentrating on all the specific acoustic moments and details that come to my ears.

In this way I become directly aware of what is meant by what I hear or by the mood that comes from listening rather than by piecing together the individual fragments of speech and

sound as if they were a stream of data ready to be processed. Meaning comes by considering the whole, not by an examination of its individual parts. A challenging and complex work of art might require a close and detailed examination of its parts which could initially inhibit this process, but once it is brought together into a clear and transparent whole, both meaning and mood can be refined and deepened.

Within this model of reading and listening, one can also characterize Inspiration. Once one's consciousness is intensively filled with details, one can actively remove this content. What replaces it is an impression or mood, a kind of after-image that fills the horizon of consciousness. Rudolf Steiner indicated that one has to pretend the physical body is not there if one wants to 'view through' to one's aura. Such a leap depends on one's own ability and state of mind and may not always be successful.

## Bringing about an Empty Consciousness

In '*Grenzen der Naturerkenntnis*' (Limits of Natural Knowledge) Rudolf Steiner describes how one goes beyond ordinary sense perception when "*one does not judge these perceptions with ideas in the ordinary sense, but that one creates symbolic or other images for oneself of what is seen with the eye, heard with the ear, also heat images, tactile images and so on. By bringing the perception into flow, so to speak, by bringing movement and life into the perception, but in such a way as it does not happen in the ordinary imagination (gewöhnliche Vorstellung), but in the symbolizing or also artistically processing perception, one comes much sooner to the power to let oneself be penetrated by the perception as such... Of course, one does not have to believe that this can be achieved in a short time.*" Here he describes the intensity and substance that one can give to sense perception. He then points out how such activity can enter the realm of the living. But inspirations only enter our consciousness when we make room for them. Our findings as well as our inspirations are unpredictable. Both are an act of grace if viewed in religious terms. Once we question our perceptions, the next step is to clear our consciousness. Remove all contents and be open to what follows. Often we fail to bring about this empty state of consciousness. It is of little help if we try to fill it with emptiness since this move does not lead to a real emptiness but rather to an imagination of emptiness that fills our consciousness. If we create the courage to become involved in what might happen in this state of emptiness, we can find a proper means of approach. As long as our consciousness fixes its attention on the imaginary plane, it will be unable to move forward. We will then remain just an observer of this inner stage and merely give it a familiar tone.

Only when I adapted a questioning attitude towards this approach was I able to move forward. In my case a change in attitude is what became important. I had to be willing to let myself be taken in a new direction. I had to put to rest everything that normally bubbles up and comes with everyday life.

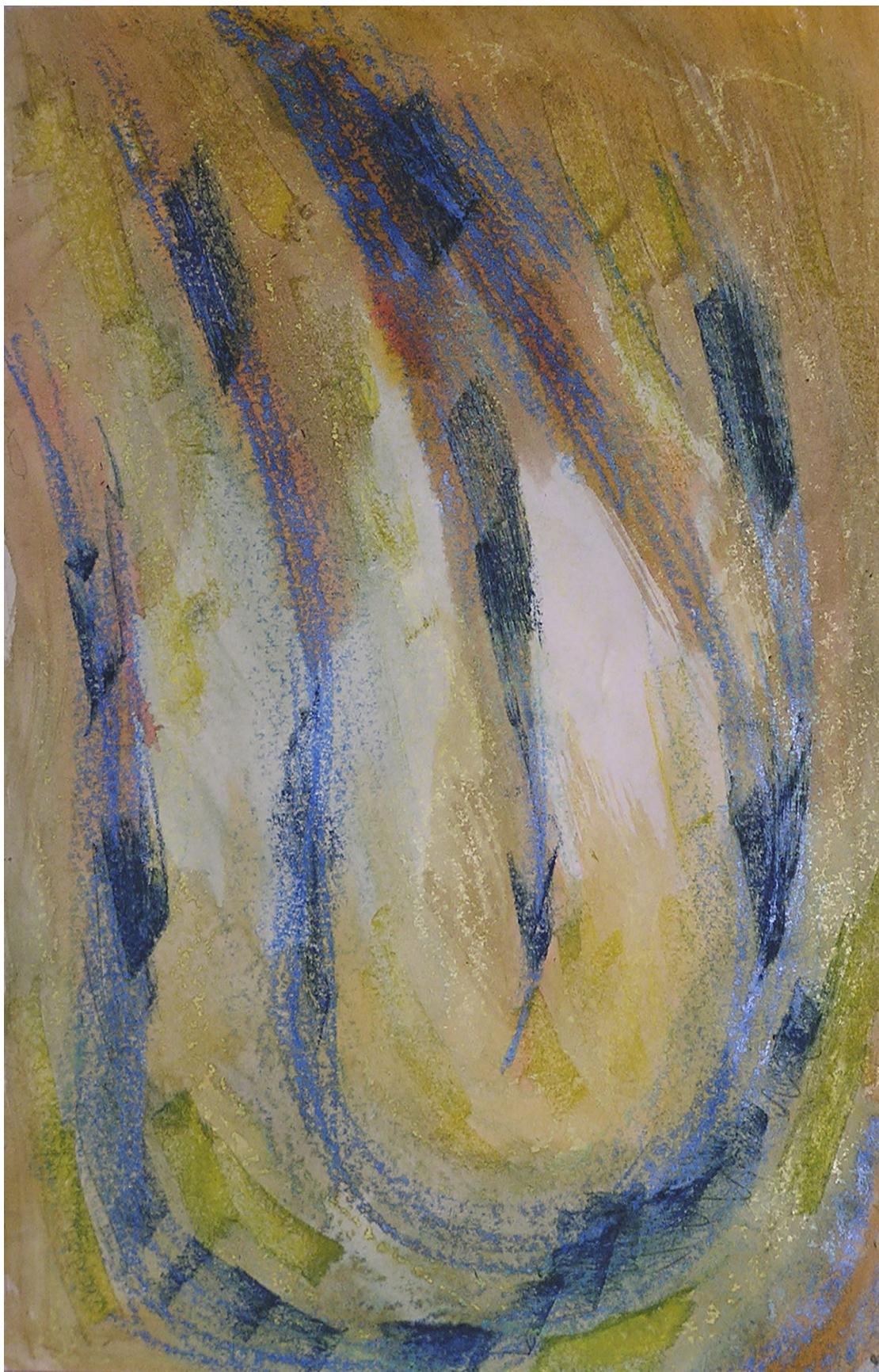
To practice and develop this change in approach, one should look back at the events of the day which can often appear to be a bizarre landscape of random events. Those events that demand attention can be set aside, making them much less obtrusive. Following that step, I can then let disturbances and unwanted impulses melt away. Physical relaxation can help support

such mental activity. From this calm state of body and mind can I succeed and move forward, now that my whole being is ready to dive into the subject matter at hand. Often while I was in a natural setting, I was able to reach this state of mind by asking myself: what was the Lord thinking here? But whatever question is asked must be one that is personal and unique.

## **Inspiration and Truth**

In the concrete, more realistic observation of nature and life, inspirations often appear with a delicacy that cannot withstand the doubts that come with ordinary cognitive life. The question - “Is this really so or is it purely a projection?” - needs to be carefully evaluated because the feeling for truth will develop slowly. In the beginning I need to check my impressions by asking questions. I am exposed to two extremes when such questions are asked, namely a destructive criticism (doubt) on the one side as well as an incredulous affirmation (belief) on the other, both of which need to be clarified by my own cognition.

With a close examination throughout life and a calm contemplation of the world of sens- es, I can develop a feeling for truth. Such a truth points to the third level of higher knowledge – Intuition – the direct knowledge of which comes from an undivided self. When such a meeting with my own selfhood takes place, it can reveal that my projections are more closely connected to me than I would like. Nevertheless, such an initial development does indicate the beginning of self-knowledge which will accompany me through all the following steps and stages. Even though these tender, newly formed experiences can be crushed by doubt or inflated by super- stition, in both cases I have to clarify the reason for my reactions rather than react imperiously with doubt or misguidedly with superstition. Getting past these two extremes enables the forces of Sensitivity and Stability to emerge.



## At the End of Absolute Truth

### About Intuition

During my study of physics at the University, I also attended some lectures in philosophy and promptly got into a discussion with a professor whose specialty was formal logic. In his seminar on Spinoza's ethics, he asked the question: "What is an axiom?" Anyone who has listened to lectures on basic math knows that "an axiom is an immediately evident statement that cannot be proved any further." When I gave this answer to my professor, he smiled smugly and replied, "surely, we can agree that 'evidence' is obsolete." To this I replied, "that can't be – otherwise you wouldn't need to talk to me at all, for you would have already presupposed what is evident, not only for you, but for me as well." Even more confident in his reply, he smiled and said in a most condescending way: "No, we have already thought about that too – not at all, I only believe that what I say is true. But before we communicate any further, you should look up the meaning of evidence in the Handbook of Basic Philosophical Terms!" Which I did, and I found that Franz Brentano, highly esteemed by Rudolf Steiner, had made some fundamental investigations into this topic. The evidence that is the certainty of knowledge cannot be proved, because the proof would have to be evident, thus one would presuppose what one wants to prove. Nor can it be refuted, because the refutation would have to be evident, but that would be a self-contradiction.

In fact, in this provable sense, evidence does not belong to philosophical subjects. The rational soul (Verstandesseele) cannot deal with the evidence at all because it is the foundation on which it carries out its investigations. But it cannot investigate itself.

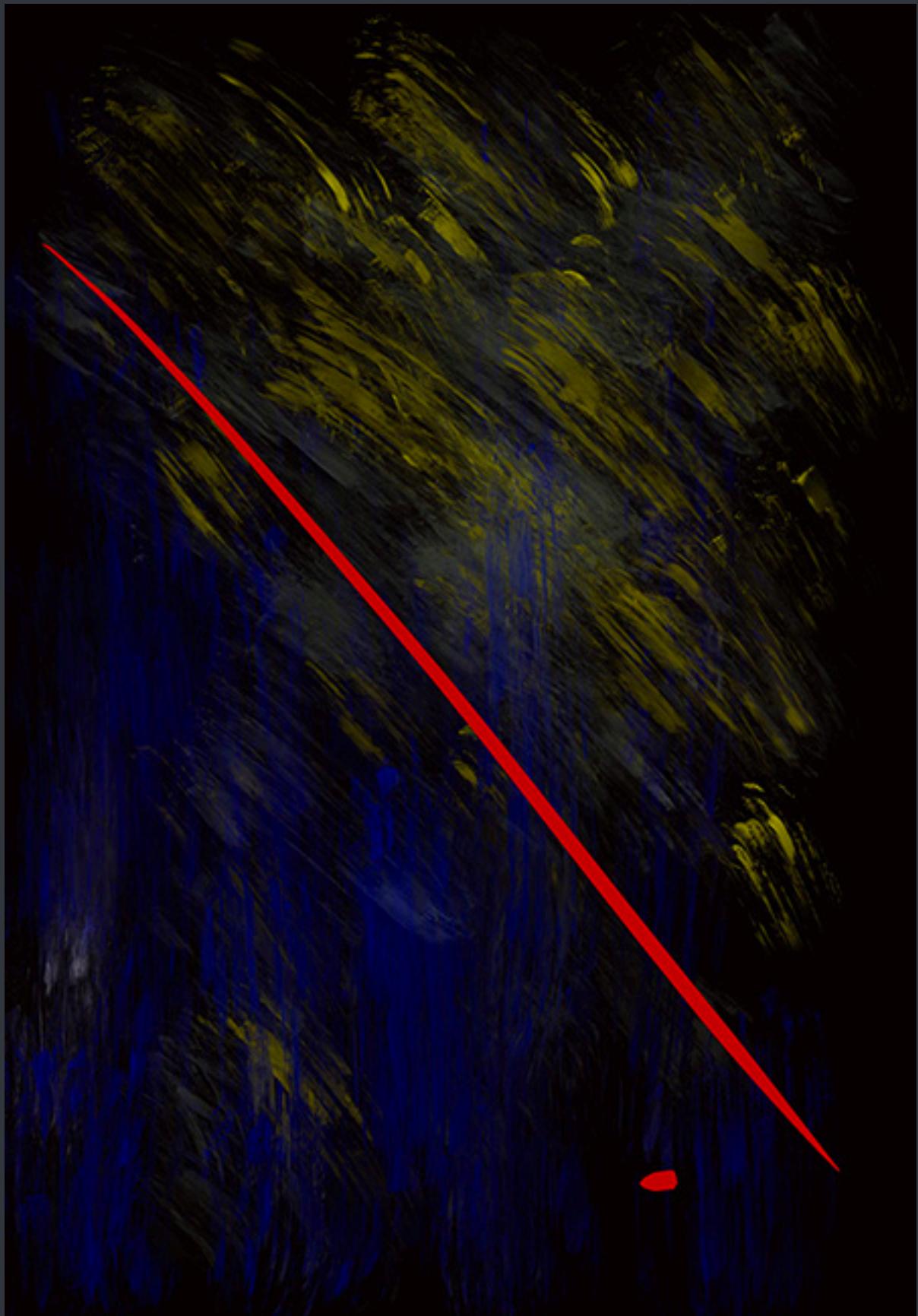
As long as a philosophy like formal logic does not allow for any self-experience in the process of creating cognition, it can only escape this seemingly solid ground and float in what could be termed the "as if." Consequently, formal logicians can only believe that they are right but can never be sure that anything really exists. There is no certainty; everything remains doubtful. And if they are not able or do not allow for self-experience, they cannot be sure that they in fact exist!

This harkens back to a time when the church father, Saint Augustine, realized that he could not doubt the fact that he had doubted.

Upset by the confrontation with my professor, I wrote a little tract to bring this debate back to reality. One can see from conducting a simple concentration exercise centered on what one is doing, namely concentrating on a specific subject, that an effort is actually taking place because one is doing it and that it would be wrong to doubt that one is indeed concentrating on this subject. In this way I gain a firmer ground which is supported by my own activity and thus ensures my existence.

My professor's reaction was disappointing, correctly thought as it was from the viewpoint of formal logic. "This," he said, "is not philosophy but psychology!"

In conclusion, the notions engendered by philosophy that play out here have far reaching consequences. There is no absolute truth and Intuition is an insight that cannot err.



## Stages of Higher Knowledge

Before I go any further, I should mention that it might be tempting to conclude that reaching such stages of higher knowledge is open only to initiates who no longer need or desire a physical presence in everyday life. I can reach the stage of Imagination if I can divorce myself, for the most part, from physical reality; Inspiration, let alone Intuition, appear to be unreachable if I am tethered to the familiar, day-to-day world that surrounds my physical existence. These assumptions are not true. If I resort to such a belief rather than retain an open sense of inquiry in my mind and body, I might be misled by these assumptions because

- Imagination starts with common images but does not end with pictorial impressions of former lives.
- Inspiration begins with understanding a written text by reading but does not end with reading the book of nature or the book of life.
- Intuition begins with a gut feeling but does not end at a communion with the celestial hierarchies.

Without such an awareness I might feel that these three stages are so difficult to attain that I will have to wait until I am a lot older to begin. Should that happen, I might never stop waiting for the right moment to arrive. As a result I would have passed the point of no return. So let's avoid that possibility and dive right in, beginning with the lowest stage first.

### Imagination

In the previous chapter, 'About Inspiration - Reading in the Book of Nature,' Imagination and Inspiration were treated with more detail. Imagination begins when I make pictures of my impressions. At first, however, I made these pictures mainly by myself. I drew from my internal stock of images to enable myself to become aware of my impressions. It is now clear to me that motifs and shapes, colors and forms, arise from what I have available as image material. With increasing restraint I learn how not to restrict this material arbitrarily but to offer it at any moment to reinforce an impression. In doing so, these images mostly point to something meaningful. They are an expression of something, not the actual thing itself. For the restorer of paintings (as mentioned above), the materials within the pictures are the actual thing, but for the art viewer, attention is not paid to the pigments on the canvas or the picture frame that holds it in place but to what wants to be shown by and through the picture itself. To recognize this, a different attitude towards cognition is required. One must learn to read the picture, not study its pigments or technique.

## **Inspiration**

With Inspiration I become aware of what is meant. Such awareness leads to a real understanding – I discover I now know the meaning of what I see and hear. Through Inspiration knowledge arises. Everyday such inspirations take place while I read or listen. Meaning appears, mediated by signs (letters and sounds) and language. Examining the script, the ink on the page, does not bring understanding to the reading of the text. I must refrain from everything that draws my attention towards a technical examination of the script. Instead, I need to embrace the inspiration that comes from the picture. Once that happens, the imagination becomes transparent and meaning comes if I can transcend the picture itself and succeed in paying attention just to its effect, its meaning, but not to the representation that the imagination initially creates at first glance.

Therefore, neither imaginations nor inspirations are immutable or fixed cognitions in the strictest sense. Imaginations are visualizations; inspirations provide information, but whether I understand this information, that is, embed it in its appropriate context, or misunderstand it or, conversely, deceive myself about its context or let myself be deceived, *both* can be problematic. Nevertheless, inspiration can be properly prepared for by an intensive immersion into an image through imagination. In meditation this dive into the image becomes a prerequisite for preparing oneself for the awareness of an inspiration. With the image I can direct my consciousness to the examination of a specific theme. I can choose my line of sight. Then I can take back my picture creating power and open myself up to a condition of ‘expectation,’ even by cultivating an innocent childlike questioning, e.g. “what did God think when he arranged the world at this place in such a way?” Individual experience will then show whether the sensory world enters into this expectation. I may have to resort to the creation of new images once again in order to let this newly found sense quietly develop in my consciousness. Should this happen, the context that this developing impression belongs to remains once again an open question.

## **Intuition**

Certainty only comes about with Intuition. As we have already seen, Intuition is the condition in which I experience myself connecting directly to what exists. I become spiritually active when I first bring this newly developing sense of mine into existence. Such an experience occurs when one pays close attention to it. In the past, one’s own ego provided a good starting point. In 1637 Descartes proclaimed ‘cognito ergo sum’ – I think, therefore I am – which helped define the centrality of the ego in our time, but since then it would be best to say more precisely: ‘cogens ergo sum’ – by thinking I am. I am sure of my existence by the act of thinking. While I think, I am doing something that cannot be doubted because I am the one who is doing the thinking. But, as often the case, one does not do so, having only the object or

the goal of one's activity in mind. Considered in a different way, I can experience my own 'I' while producing this activity, for I am the one who does it and knows about it and, finally, the one who experiences this activity. No interpretation is needed; nothing intervenes that could make this activity right or wrong.

Epistemologically speaking, with Intuition the separation of subject and object is abolished. This becomes obvious when one concentrates on this activity. By concentrating I am able to know myself as the one who does this and for whom it is intended. Rudolf Steiner formulated this during one of his weekly sayings (Wochensprüche): "*Always creating itself/ Being of the Soul becomes aware of itself.*" ("Sich selbst erschaffend stets/wird Seelensein sich selbst gewahr")

This basic form of Intuition already reveals the fundamental difference between truth on the one hand and conjecture on the other. There is no doubtable truth in the creation of which I am involved. All of what is true becomes truth because I participate in its appearance. The consequence of this experience is that there can be no absolute truth, that is, truth that is detached from me. Truth is therefore always individual. But this is also the reason why only I can describe an Intuition. For others it is just a story. This intuitive experience is not transferable. I can try to describe in a rational way the results of an Intuition so that it could be partially understood by a reader or observer. But this would not be same as the experience itself.

Does this mean that most everyone lives in a self-constructive world, apart and separate from everything that is held in common as constructivism claims? To answer this question we have to consider separately the form and the content of an intuition.

The qualitative content, the meaning of Intuition, is Inspiration. It gives me a clear relationship to the world. But the form, that is, how this content appears in me, is creative, something I bring forth from within.

World content is essential to the pursuit of Intuition. For example, I, as a human being, meet another human being. In a way this short description of such a meeting is inaccurate because it is not about an encounter in the familiar sense that places me here and the other there which is typical for a solitary consciousness to do when it goes about creating a subject and object or objective awareness. It is rather the matter of becoming aware of the other, that is, a different dimension within myself. I am the other as well as myself. In this way I form a communion with the other while retaining the awareness of my ego, my I. This provides me with a spiritual moment of unification by forming a realization of the 'we.'

There are many stages of unification to realize which depend upon the degree of my spiritual development. The level of my accomplishment will depend on the degree to which my being can recognize what exists outside of me. Our inability to do so provides the reason why we are unable to approach angels or any of the other higher hierarchies. The level of intuition we develop depends on the clarity with which I become aware of the other.

## Four Attitudes in Sense Experience

Already while participating in the world of the senses, I can begin to ascend from ordinary object consciousness, which simply registers what it sees, to the world of intuitions and world-bearing beings which enable the existence of our sensory world. To seek Intuition in the same way we seek to understand the sense world may seem astonishing at first since I might otherwise think that Intuition can only be found in a higher spiritual world. But I would like to suggest that our senses can lead us closer to Intuition due to their incorruptibility.

Ordinary day-to-day consciousness is confronted with the flow of sensory impressions and turns them into objects. This process is essential for survival. Without it we would not be able to cope with everyday life.

In the next stage, I discover that such impressions affect me; they touch me in different ways before I absorb them inside of me. Although I am touched by them, I do not let myself be moved by them. I might, for example, discover a will within them that is not only alien to me but one that opposes mine. Such a reaction can come at first with the sense of touch. While I touch, I experience my will working in the physical world. The pressure I encounter when I exert my will with the movement that touch provides creates an opposing force that interacts with mine. With touch I experience my will working in the world. This is why we are inclined to trust our understanding of existence to an appearance we can see and touch.

If I unite myself to a greater degree with my environment, I can discover that it, in a way, 'infects' me. It penetrates me through its impressions and influences which can happen in an unconscious way often through personal fatigue. Such fatigue can come, for example, after one tries to absorb all of the many exhibits while attending a lengthy and elaborate trade fair. By contrast, any work I do in a natural environment can bring a significant refreshment to my being and strengthen me in untold ways.

Behind this life-force-invoking world of sensory phenomena, a deeper layer of understanding becomes accessible when I succeed with diving into this world with my own will and then become aware that my will is modified by the will of the world that lies outside of me.

If I wish to follow this process of internalization, I must learn to direct my attention to existence itself. Such attention is difficult to characterize because it is so fundamental, for it begins with amazement that something outside of our ego actually exists!

As long as I take it for granted that the world just simply exists with all its familiar trimmings, I have not yet arrived at this level of approach. But if I can raise my attention to a higher level, I find that I can become aware of a will which differs from the use of my own will that is instead characterized by sublimity, perseverance and universality – a world-age lasting, world-carrying will. In the same manner that I used to approach the being of others described above, I can immerse myself in this will of the world with inspiring results. Such a description takes place retrospectively. It comes about when I am able to compare this intuitive

perception with the knowledge of my own limitations which often seem so weak by comparison.

That the sense world contains this character of will, which I can become conscious of through intuition but which also exists independently, enables me to feel and understand that this sense world is real and can be perceived with ordinary consciousness. Therefore, I can acquire a feeling for truth from this experience of the sense world. Rudolf Steiner emphasized that this was the actual meaning of natural science, that is, to enable man, with his separation and isolation from the physical world, to experience truth, which can also become the guideline for all supersensible experiences.

In becoming aware of all of the different and unknown wills at work in the world, strange as they are and can be, doing so constitutes a basic condition of Intuition. With the exercise of will I bring Intuition into existence. With more attention paid to this discovery, depending in part on the quality and depth of my will, I am able to grasp and embrace more and more the will of the other being. In this way does personal development determine the breadth of my own intuition.

Intuition always carries within it an identification, a volitional identity. This identity lives within me as far as my consciousness is able to reach. Another being, however, can encompass considerably more depending on its level of development, especially if it includes the whole of the cosmos.



## Epilogue

The explanations I have provided come largely in philosophical terms which I feel are helpful in order to direct attention to this ‘language-less’ world that surrounds us. We usually overlook this spiritual world because we are not used to exposing our attention to the sublimity of being in our daily life while we are carried along by the spiritual forces that come from the hierarchies without being aware of them. Nevertheless, these experiences are much closer to us than one might think.

### **Barbarossa or the Cooperation with Spiritual Beings**

In the chapter, The Scientist’s Fear of Imagination, I wrote about my experience during the performance of a mystery drama at the Goetheanum when I offered a little, invisible man an opportunity to take a seat on my arm just after he triggered this question in my mind: “Why doesn’t anyone hear me?” Today, some 20 years later, I have the impression that I could not have grasped the full extent of this situation at that time. I am still convinced he exists though now for different reasons. I would reformulate his question: “Why don’t *you* hear me?” or even more precisely: “Why don’t *you* listen to me?” And I would also have to re-evaluate my response, taking into account the advances in self-knowledge that I have made since that time. Such advances have not come without a string of failures and bad luck, some of which I described in my professional work at the Hiscia Laboratory in cancer research when a test of a new carbon-fiber disk for mixing mistletoe dramatically self-destructed.

Such bad luck did of course continue. Why, I asked, does this happen to me? At first I thought the reasons for these failures were unsolvable. I thought elementary beings were responsible and assumed that they had no conscience and took pleasure creating mischief. Sometimes they seem to support me when I work for others, or so I thought. Was I working for these spirits or were they working for me? Ursula Burkhard’s book about Karlik helped me come to terms with the often naive notions that circulate through our culture about elemental beings.

So how has this process of getting to know Barbarossa developed over the years since I have become aware of him? Now as I write about him, I experience his presence once again. He sits on my right shoulder with his legs crossed and reads what I type. When I recall some of my anger and frustration with him in the past that prevented me from entering into an inner conversation with him, he sits there and chuckles with an uncomprehending laugh. I ask him: “do you have some objection to something I have written?” “You will see,” he responds. “What will I see?” I ask.

Suddenly, without warning, he takes me to his underground workshop where I can't see anything. I can only sense something there without knowing what it means. This seems too much like a fairytale to me, and the thread of the experience between us breaks. I repeat the question – what will I see? – but that question takes me back to his workshop once again. Surprisingly, thanks to Inspiration, I am now aware that his workshop is underground, whatever that might mean. But now at the very end of my story, Barbarossa has disappeared. I don't know why. Perhaps he has other tasks to attend to.

I break off my description here because I do not want to write an introduction to the world of elementary beings. I don't consider myself to be sufficiently capable of doing so. Nevertheless, it does seem that these beings are dependent on us for recognition, without which their activity can stray into many unwanted places. Rejecting them outright often leads to frustrating encounters that can, as it did in the Hiscia Lab 'spin pit,' turn out to be particularly destructive. Since then I have learned that these beings depend on our ability to recognize them in our everyday life. If we ignore them, they will serve other beings that may not be connected to mankind in a favorable way. But with all that I have said and experienced, I do want to cultivate a love for the everyday and to deepen your attention to even what might seem to be the most insignificant moments in your life. Difficult as it will be to quiet the never-ending chatter of day-to-day life, I hope that you are able to find those moments when Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition can flourish and provide you with spiritual experiences that come from the center of your life, experiences that exist between the polarities of sensitivity and stability that will outlast the temporality of life and be with you always.

Andreas Heertsch, January, 2022

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Page 16 - Sulz am Neckar, Annegret Heertsch. Photograph by Andreas Heertsch.

Page 24 – Views of Notre Dame, <https://meinfrankreich.com/paris-aussichten-notre-dame>

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## References

Page 14, Goethe, *Faust I*, Lines 2441ff.

Page 17, Rudolf Steiner, Notebook entry, GA 40.

Page 18, Lucifer’s proclamation, “All those who flee from me, love me as well,” comes from Rudolf Steiner’s Mystery Play, *The Guardian of the Threshold*, Scene 6, GA 14.

Page 18, Luna’s observation “the soul must never wish itself to fall; yet when it falls, it must draw wisdom from the fall.” comes from Rudolf Steiner’s, *The Soul’s Awakening*, Scene 9, GA 14.

Page 19. “...because one rises from this abyss/in association with many spirits...” comes from the second part of a note in one of the notebooks of Rudolf Steiner, GA40, page 224.

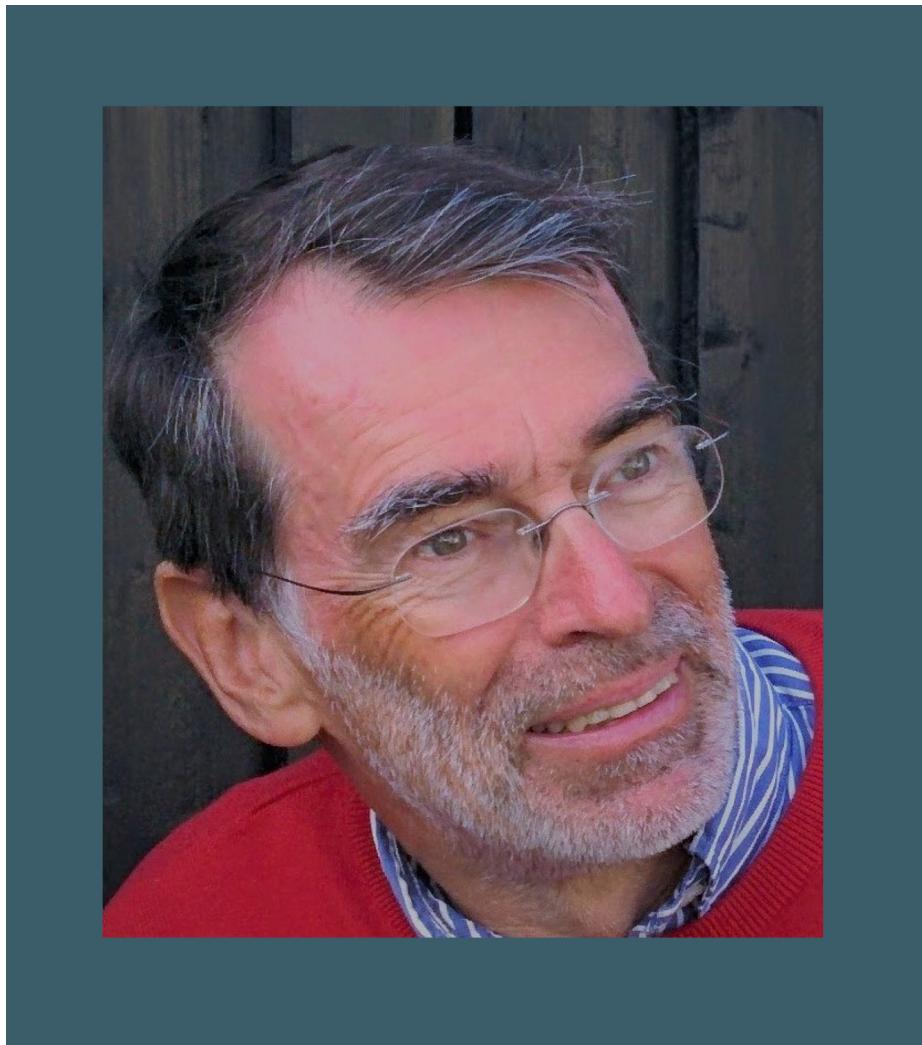
Page 30, The six subsidiary exercises can be found in Rudolf Steiner’s *Knowledge of Higher Worlds and its Attainment*, GA 13.

Page 42, “one does not judge these perceptions...” translated from Rudolf Steiner’s *Grenzen der Naturekenntnis* (Limits of Natural Knowledge) 7.8. Vortrag. 2./3/ 10. 1920 GA 322.

Page 43, Rudolf Steiner describes the Rose Cross meditation in Chapter V, Part 6 of *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* which can be found on line at [https://wn.rsarchive.org/Books/GA013/English/RSP1963/GA013\\_c05-06.html](https://wn.rsarchive.org/Books/GA013/English/RSP1963/GA013_c05-06.html)

Page 49, “*Always creating itself / Being of the Soul becomes aware of itself.*” (“Sich selbst erschaffend stets/wird Seelensein sich selbst gewahr”), Rudolf Steiner, *Seelenkalender* (Calendar of the Soul), Week 24, GA40.

## About the Author



Born in Hanover, Germany in 1953, Andreas was given an electrical construction set when he was 11 years old which stimulated a lifelong interest in technology and physics. In Göttingen, Germany, at the Max Planck Institute of Fluid Dynamics, he studied physics with Ernst August Müller, an Anthroposophist, and wrote a dissertation based on his experiments with the movement of particles in micro environments. In 1982 he decided to pursue a career of study and research at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland. During the following year he was able to apply his knowledge of physics and technology at the Association for Cancer Research in neighboring Arlesheim in his work with the Hiscia Institute where Iscador mistletoe therapy originated during the late 1940s. Apart from his contribution to IT development at the Goetheanum since 1996, he was also in charge of the Goetheanum branch of the Anthroposophical Society for many years. He retired from the Hiscia Institute in 2018 and continues to provide support and encouragement for the Goetheanum's many initiatives. Andreas currently resides in Dornach, Switzerland.



