

THE IMPULSE OF SPIRIT RECOLLECTION

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This article attempts to explore what Steiner intended to achieve through the novel introduction of the ideas of karma and reincarnation among his esoteric teachings; to see what he failed to achieve and what he managed to bring out, given his premature death; and finally to try to ascertain what are the ultimate implications for the present. To start with, let us create a timeline of Steiner's efforts in restoring knowledge of karma and reincarnation within the modern Mysteries.

Historical Attempts to Introduce the Teachings of Karma and Reincarnation

In *Karmic Relationships* Steiner offers us the challenging thought that the Anthroposophical Movement was actually “returning to its own germinal impulse.” There he also specifies: “Apart from this, I can remind you today of something else. The first few lectures I was to give at that time to a very small circle were to have the title, ‘Practical Exercises for the Understanding of Karma.’”⁽¹⁾ Then he proceeds to confess that he became aware of intense opposition to this proposal and therefore the lectures were not given. He concludes: “Thus we return in a certain sense to the starting point. What must now be a reality was then intention.” Let us deepen this exploration further.

The same idea expressed above was brought up throughout the *Karmic Relationships* cycles, volume 5, where he tells us: “And now that we have tried through the Christmas Meeting at the Goetheanum to re-organize the Anthroposophical Society, I am able to speak about a certain fact to which probably very little attention has been paid hitherto.” And further: “I gave a first lecture which was similar in character to the lectures given later on to the Groups. This first lecture had an unusual title, one which might at the time have been considered rather daring. The title was: ‘Studies of the practical working of karma.’ My intention was to speak quite openly about the way in which karma works.”⁽²⁾ From the above it appears that at least one lecture was given; the others did not follow.

Much the same is said in *Karmic Relationships*, volume 6: “At the very first gathering held in Berlin for the purpose of founding the German Section of the Theosophical Society, I chose for a lecture I proposed to give, the title: *Practical Questions of Karma*. I wanted to introduce then what I intend to achieve now, namely, the serious and earnest study of karma.”⁽³⁾ As to what these lectures and “practical exercises” could be, that is specified in *Karmic Relationships*, volume 2, lecture 6. Immediately after introducing the so-called Moon/Sun/Saturn exercise, he has this to say: “And if one is going to speak of practical karma exercises—I told you already that I wanted to do it at the beginning of the foundation of the Anthroposophical Society, but did not succeed at that time—then one must really begin in this way.” This offers us an understanding that Steiner had in mind quite advanced exercises when he initially brought forth his teaching of karma and reincarnation.

Although Steiner conveys that he did not achieve his goals in the way he had set out to do, he leaves us with a telling comment. After saying that his impulse was not taken up, he continues: “It therefore remained a task which had to be pursued under the surface as it were of the anthroposophical stream, performed as an obligation to the spiritual world.”⁽⁴⁾

We can distinguish three phases in Steiner’s attempts to bring out the teachings about karma and reincarnation together with the practical exercises—although traces exist also in between these phases. The first was an isolated attempt as early as 1902, from which Steiner soon desisted.

The second wave occurred in conjunction with the performing of the Mystery Dramas. The lectures about karma and reincarnation followed in their wake, most intensely from 1910 to 1913, then with isolated lectures. Examples are the cycles *Manifestations of Karma* (1910), *Reincarnation and Karma* (1912), or the comments on the Mystery Dramas present in *Secrets of the Threshold* or those gathered in *Three Lectures on the Mystery Dramas*. This second effort came to an end with the onset of WWI.

Steiner’s continued effort on the Mystery Plays was prevented by the outbreak of WWI. About this he says:

I will try to give a brief outline of what was to have been the content of the Munich lectures but the most important and essential information that was to have been given there must be reserved for less turbulent times. I am astonished to find certain people thinking that the strenuous efforts required for giving very important teachings of Spiritual Science—as was intended in Munich—can be applied in times such as those in which we are now living. But it will be realized one day that this simply is not possible, that the highest truths cannot be communicated when storms are raging. As far as my theme is concerned, I will give a course of lectures on it later on, when karma permits, in substitution for what was to have been given in Munich.⁽⁵⁾

The stream of karma revelations decreased considerably and only fully resumed after the Christmas Conference.

The final attempt, only partial because of Steiner's premature death, took place after WWI—as we will see later (see the section below, “The Archetypal Social Phenomenon”)—and most strongly after the Christmas Conference. The lectures delivered on karma and reincarnation form the single most important contribution of Steiner after the Christmas Conference—seventy-five of them in *Karmic Relationships* alone. Here specific karma exercises were proposed once more and this time more fully. In addition the ideas of karma and reincarnation acquired a sense of concreteness with the specific reference to historical figures whom Steiner followed throughout their incarnations. The Christmas Conference itself was framed around the revelations of the spiritual genesis of the Michael stream, within which the souls of Aristotle/Steiner and Alexander the Great/Wegman played a central role. Added to this was the repeated injunction to take pains to figure out to which of the Michaelic streams each one of us belongs to.

Knowledge of Higher Worlds and Mystery Dramas

A first place in which Steiner portrayed how individuals affect the destinies of each other is the four Mystery Dramas. Steiner attributed great importance to these plays, so much

so that he repeatedly stated that if those plays had been taken more seriously he would not have had to give as many lectures.⁽⁶⁾

The *Portal of Initiation* was written in 1910. In this first Mystery Drama, which he calls a Rosicrucian drama, Steiner acknowledges a debt to Goethe's *Fairy Tale of the Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily*. The second, *The Soul's Probation*, is inspired by traditions and legends of and with underlying historical connections to the Knights Templar. In both plays Steiner also carried further the inspiration of a pupil who had intended to write the plays. She had died and continued to inspire Steiner from the spiritual world. This is why the first two plays carry the mention "through Rudolf Steiner." The last two, *The Guardian of the Threshold* and *The Soul's Awakening*, were the fruit of Steiner's inspiration alone.

All through the Mystery Dramas we see how individuals help each other in the steps of spiritual development. For the first time on stage, a drama offered understanding of human development from a spiritual perspective moving beyond life on earth alone. The characters portray the struggle to follow a spiritual path and apprehend the reality of the spiritual world. This leads them in turn to experiences in the soul world, the encounter with the Guardian of the Threshold, the reawakening of memories from the sphere of the Sun and from the Cosmic Midnight, and finally the reawakening of memories of previous lives. Throughout the play, individuals, tied by strong links of destiny, play a role in each other's development. Love and willingness to self-sacrifice play a central part in each play.

Many situations of conflict arise throughout the plays and the plot reveals their deeper roots in previous lives. Some conflicts are thus brought to a denouement while others arise and are left open for future resolution. The fourth play ends without a final resolution. Steiner projected further plays but the tragic circumstances of World War I and the illness leading to his death prevented the continuation of this artistic pursuit.

In the first play we witness the spiritual awakening of the individual Thomasius (also called Johannes). The second drama focuses primarily on the trials undergone by Capesius's soul; the third and fourth follow most closely the fate of Strader. However, all throughout the plays each character continues his soul development in such a way that a collective maturation culminates in the fourth in the attempt to bring spiritual knowledge

into the world as a renewing impulse, through an industrial pursuit. The three individuals mentioned, plus Maria, form the nucleus of this endeavor. They can attempt such a step in virtue of the fact that they have harmonized their karma to quite an extent. Offering spiritual guidance to all of them is the figure of the initiate Benedictus. In scene 9 of *The Guardian of the Threshold*, Benedictus expresses the extent to which these souls have united thus: “United with you [Capesius], Strader and Thomasius in future will be able to accomplish much for the right progress of men. The forces of the soul which they possess have been prepared since earth’s beginning in such a way that in the cosmic course they can unite now with your spirit to form a triad filled with strength.”

That these plays constituted something quite novel and unique in the development of anthroposophy has been intuited by more than one of Steiner’s followers. Interestingly E. Pfeiffer and V. Tomberg similarly place the plays on the same level of Steiner’s main books—*Philosophy of Freedom*, *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*, and *Occult Science*.⁽⁷⁾ The Mystery Dramas form a contrast and a complementary step to the basic books. *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* addresses the matter of individual knowledge and moral imagination. The other two basic books—more specifically *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*—characterize the archetypal path of development that an individual follows in reaching for spiritual knowledge. Steiner later revealed that what is said there in relation to individual development is a valid generalization. However, no individual development follows such exact blueprint.

The Mystery Dramas give us an indication of how an individual development deviates from the idealized and general path given in the basic books. This is supported by what Steiner says: “Everything you find in my book, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, . . . combined with what was said in *Occult Science*, can be found, after all, in a much more forceful, true-to-life, and substantial form in the Rosicrucian Mystery [*Portal of Initiation*]. The reason is that it is more highly individualized. In last analysis there is no such a thing as a universal path of development. There are only the individual forms that this takes.”⁽⁸⁾

There is a further difference between the two sets of books. The Mystery Dramas offer us indications of what is needed in order to reach deeper understanding and action

in community matters. Through the Mystery Dramas we are given concrete examples of what can be achieved through the concerted action of individuals for the good of the community. This polarity of individual/community is made manifest in how one and the other sets of books are used. The *Philosophy of Freedom* and *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* are to be read and studied by the individual, even if supported by a study group. The Mystery Dramas are meant to be performed before an audience, mirroring their intended use in community building of a new kind. We can experience the plays at a progressive depths by reading, seeing, performing, or directing them.

Through the Mystery Dramas, especially when performed, we gain insights on the soul life of other individuals. In this way the Mystery Dramas are an education for empathy, for gaining insight into the reality of other souls. They give another value to knowledge that is gained not only through personal effort, but also through the effects of personal relationships. The characters of the Mystery Dramas gain new insights through the lively interplay, dialogue, and debate with others. They learn to explore the one-sided opinions of others in order to enrich their own one-sided perspective. This is because these new perspectives can only come and be met in other people, not abstractly.

Two examples will suffice here. At the beginning of the first play we see Theodora entering a trance-like state and revealing the new experience of the Christ in the etheric. To Strader this is a phenomenon that he cannot deny and it shakes loose the materialistic scientific outlook that has supported him in his vocation. Theodora plays a growing part in his life, first as a friend, then as his wife, leading him to renew his scientific efforts towards the integration of what spiritual science reveals to be possible. Capesius is the historian groomed in the prevailing materialistic predicament, trying to come to terms with the views professed by the initiate Benedictus and having difficulty entering the kind of language and ideas that he finds through him. An awakening occurs to him when the artist Thomasius, with whom he is closely associated, brings to completion his portrait. Capesius is struck by the painting because it seems to bring to life a spiritual perception of his individuality. Thomasius has indeed understood the powers that Capesius had by virtue of a previous incarnation, even though they cannot manifest in the present.

Characters in the Mystery Dramas strive to reach to the conscious awakening of the spirit-self through which we can start to master the impulses of our lower nature. This is an attempt that often takes longer than a lifetime. Among the characters in the play, only Benedictus and Maria have fully attained this level. However, a stage can be achieved through which we can assume tasks of a spiritual and social nature, while exerting mastery over our lower nature, as is the case for Thomasius towards the end of the dramas. We will follow stages of his inner development in order to draw out some themes that evolve throughout the Mystery Dramas. Introducing the character of Thomasius has an immediate advantage over all the other characters, since it shows all the detours and ups and downs that spiritual development can present in its departure from an ideal.

Milestones in the Mystery Dramas

Thomasius is the character on stage that introduces a central element to the idea of “working with destiny,” the so-called double or doubles. We will follow important stages of his spiritual development closely, as they are indicative of the dimensions that make spiritual development individual in the Mystery Dramas. We will start this approach by looking at doubles.

The double is the Ahrimanic being that enters the human being shortly before incarnation and accompanies him until a few days before death. This double ties us to the earthly forces and to our lower human nature. What have been called “doubles” are particular manifestations of the larger double. In effect the double appears in more than one way, since in the spiritual world, it is possible to find “multiple spiritually objective copies” of our being and of our double.⁽⁹⁾ This is why it is possible to refer both to the double as a totality as well as to doubles as particular, fractional manifestations of the nature of the double. Doubles are parts of our souls over which we do not have full control; they are like islands in our psyche, loosely corresponding—at least part of them—to what psychology calls “complexes.” These are built of etheric and astral substance, which are given shape by Ahriman. The double manifests outwardly in each human being through behaviors that cannot be consciously controlled: reactions that

automatically appear in certain situations, behaviors that we indulge in and later regret, compulsions, unjustified fears, etc.

In extreme situations, the double can become objectified. In the lecture *Secrets of the Threshold*, Steiner offers the example of the “intrigant” (schemer) seeing a likeness of himself sitting at his desk. In his instance, what causes this apparition is the degree of unconsciousness of his deeper motives.⁽¹⁰⁾ The schemer lives fully in his plans with barely any consciousness of how he is giving life to the double in his soul and thereby strengthening its existence. In extreme instances, as when he faces conditions of soul despair, the double becomes visible.

Thomasius brings his double to manifestation out of his unrecognized sensual attraction for Maria. This is what the play calls simply “double.” In the fourth play he gives life to another spectral form out of his longing to continue living as in his youth—the “spirit of Johannes’ youth”—this latter of a Luciferic nature. Thomasius has difficulty facing the idea of adapting to the requests of the new business environment he has just joined. He takes refuge in the attempt to recover the élan of his youth, even though he intellectually knows the uselessness of the attempt. When we look at both the double and the spirit of Johannes’s youth, we recognize that the first one is a larger, more encompassing entity, hence its role in leading Thomasius towards the redemption of the spirit of his youth and in guiding him towards the Guardian of the Threshold.

From the latter example we recognize that the double—like the opposing forces themselves—has more than one function, and this function varies over time. In the last play, because Thomasius has attained to a new degree of experience in the spiritual world, the double guides him to a further awakening. He reproaches him for leaving the spirit of his youth to live a life of shadow, while he dwells protractedly in his outgrown dreams. It is finally the double who leads him to the Guardian.

Meeting the Guardian is in more than one way confronting oneself; however, it should primarily be understood as a meeting with an objective being. In Steiner’s words: “There on the threshold our true ego is able to clothe itself in all our weaknesses, all our failings, everything that induces us to cling with our whole being either to the physical world or at least to the elemental world.” And further: “He [the Guardian] arrays himself in everything that arouses in us not only anxiety and distress but also disgust, and

loathing. He clothes himself in our weaknesses, in things that bring us to admit: ‘Our fear of separating from him makes us shudder.’”(10) The soul perceives the meeting in a state of twilight consciousness and therefore does not allow it to come to full consciousness. When it obliterates its awareness it leaves itself vulnerable to Ahrimanic attacks. In fact Lucifer asserts himself strongly from within and unites himself with Ahriman, blocking access to the spiritual world.

A further stage in the transformation of the doubles lies in the recognition of their karmic origin. The first experiences Thomasius achieves in the spiritual world occur in the imaginative stage, but this has as yet no objective existence. A new development occurs in Thomasius’s life when he achieves knowledge of his previous life in *The Soul’s Probation*. He there achieves the first stage of initiation. However, even at that stage, he can still introduce the possibility of error with him in the objective spiritual world. This is what happens in his later attraction for Theodora’s soul.

The Mystery Dramas show us that previous life memories can easily be recognized from what we receive from sense impressions. A person who recovers such bits of knowledge can make no use of them in her daily life. They may for example point to an ability that she had but has no longer. What we were in a previous life is most likely something we would not be able to imagine. In the last play Thomasius, for instance, sees the image of his previous incarnation but believes it to be Theodora who is the object of his pursuit at the moment.

The majority of recollections, especially in the initial stages, lead us to the awareness of our shortcomings. Therefore these impressions are often overpowering. Capesius in *The Soul’s Probation* illustrates what such a case is. In the life as a Knight Templar, he had abandoned his son and daughter before joining the Templars. The recognition of this fact aggrieves Capesius’s soul with guilt. He is overwhelmed by what he perceives as the weight of his responsibility, unaware that he does not have to fulfill the weight of his debt in one life alone. For a time he takes refuge in an attempt to flee from all earthly responsibility and from the very notion of individuality. He is unable to take on responsibility for what he learns about himself from a previous incarnation, partly because he doesn’t have a clear understanding of the workings of karma. Under the weight of self-loathing and guilt, he wants to renounce future incarnations for an empty

life in the spirit. Though he feels at home in the spirit world, he is still bound to earthly thinking.

The stages of the encounter with the Guardian, leading to the recollection of previous lives, place upon the individual the necessity of assuming his karmic responsibilities. The character of Strader illustrates this willingness to assume the weight of karmic responsibility derived from the self-knowledge he acquires at every stage. This is what he expresses with the words “And yet that will come which has to come about.” When, in the fourth play, he sees himself abandoned by the others in the business pursuit, he accepts the decree of destiny that leaves his work unaccomplished and therefore accepts the need to continue his work from the spiritual world. He can do this because he has accepted that this is the way to strengthen his individuality, even if the fruits can only be harvested in a next incarnation.

Of all the characters on stage, it is Maria who is most able and willing to repay her karmic debts. She can clearly see the origin of her shortcomings in previous lives (both the Templar and the Egyptian) and she is able to continuously act from the inspiration of the higher self, having in effect passed the Guardian of the Threshold by virtue of her own achievements. She can willingly offer sacrifices in order to sustain the advancement of Thomasius’s and Capesius’s souls.

The recognition of previous lives and their impact is what allows the strength of the team Capesius-Strader-Thomasius-Maria to build in working for Hillary’s enterprise in the last play. Their strength can now be more than the sum of the parts. That is not to say that they are immune from the temptations to which their doubles are still susceptible. However, they have now the potential of affecting the social world around them in a more decisive way.

Over and against the above individuals stand the Council of Brothers in the Temple. The ability to strive for the reconciliation of different viewpoints—relinquishing a cherished opinion—is the path to true esotericism. Tomberg indicates, “A school in the highest sense is not only a place where spiritual knowledge is taught; it is much more than that, it is a community which is enabled to form common insights by passing through trials together.”⁽¹²⁾ In the Council of the Brothers, debate and discussion is not avoided in the name of concord, nor is it carried out of mere conventional politeness.

Rather, the effort of harmonizing apparently discordant and contradictory viewpoints is the ground for the forming of higher knowledge. In this endeavor works the harmonizing principle of Christ. The individuals gathered in a council are able to sacrifice their lower ego to the higher ego in Christ. The ideas they grapple with must be expressed fully and manifest as opposites time and again, before they can find reconciliation at a higher level.

The “path of the Mystery Dramas” indicates what direct relationship exists between our ability to transform our lower nature and the possibility to promote healthy social change. This is a path that leads us first to the recognition of the double—and doubles—in our souls, later to the Guardian of the Threshold and to the recognition of the deeper causes of our shortcomings in the revelations of our previous lives.

The path of the Mystery Dramas can be characterized as a “social path” in contradistinction to the more individual path outlined by Steiner in *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*. In the last decades, within anthroposophical circles a longing for a deeper understanding of what we could call a social path has come to the surface of consciousness and found expression in a number of researchers and authors. B. J. Lievegoed was long a pioneer in this field, offering many practical applications throughout his life. The expression of the uniqueness of this path is clearly articulated in his *Towards the 21st Century: Doing the Good* (1972) and in *The Battle for the Soul* (1993), among others. Other contributions to the matter have been those of Prokofieff (*The Occult Significance of Forgiveness*, 1991), Margreet van den Brink (*More Precious Than Light: How Dialogue Can Transform Relationships and Build Community*, 1994), Harry Salman (*The Social World as Mystery Center*, 1998), Baruch Luke Urieli and Hans Muller Wiedemann (*Learning to Experience the Etheric World: Empathy, the After-Image and a New Social Ethic*, 1998), Dieter Brüll (*The Mysteries of Social Encounters*, 2002), Coenraad van Houten, (*Practising Destiny*, 2000, and *The Threefold Nature of Destiny Learning*, 2004). Apart from Lievegoed’s first book all of these contributions have appeared within thirteen years of each other! A real yearning is manifesting at the turn of the century for a deeper understanding of what it is to be social from an anthroposophical perspective.

We will proceed by referring to what different authors have to offer in this field. Progressively, we will move back from the sum of the partial vistas opened by these approaches back to what it is that unites them all in Steiner's legacy. Although we will refer primarily to the social path, on occasion we will bring forward particular "applications" or tools of social development, particularly those contributed by van Houten and van den Brink.

The Path of Forgiveness

Prokofieff takes his start from an understanding of the act of forgiveness.⁽¹³⁾ He characterizes the four initial stages of the path of forgiveness as a progressive permeation of the human sheaths by the ego. In the first stage the ego acts upon the physical body; in the second upon the etheric body, in the third upon the astral, and finally upon itself. The further stages upon the path of forgiveness lie in the distant future and will not interest us at present. Each of the four steps corresponds in its way to an equivalent step along the Rosicrucian path, the "path of knowledge through the will."

The first stage is achieved through an education of the senses toward tolerance, through the ego working on our physical body. Through the impressions of the senses, the ego comes to awareness. Consider the case of someone for whom we have only instinctual antipathy. As soon as our senses perceive this person, an immediate, automatic reaction colors our perception. In *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* we encounter the following injunction: "If I encounter a human being and blame him for his weaknesses, I rob myself of the power of higher knowledge; but if I try to enter lovingly into his qualities, I master this power." In the first instance (pure antipathy) we receive the impressions of the sense world through our double. In the second instance we develop interest in the other person through a power that transcends sympathy and antipathy and is a first step towards love. This is tolerance or that which corresponds to the relatively recent term of *empathy*. To achieve this goal we need to educate the senses from the ego, rather than automatically receive sense impressions through our double. The ultimate goal is the development of *moral thinking*, the education of our thinking and purification from egoism allowing us to perceive that which is positive in the other person.

Developing the power of empathy through an exertion of the will demands precisely that we see in the other person what is common with ourselves and with the universally human, even before we recognize what makes the other person unique. Tolerance for the other person comes in great part from tolerance towards ourselves, and this is a first step in the recognition of the forces of evil expressed in our soul through our double. This first stage corresponds in the Christian Rosicrucian path to the study of spiritual science, leading to the education of the senses and the transformation of thinking.

The second stage is that of forgiveness proper, to which tolerance/empathy forms the prelude. In this stage we work from our ego into the ether body. The stage of forgiveness is rendered possible through the active participation and permeation of our ego through the Spirit Self. Through forgiveness, Christ himself as the Lord of Karma can work in the etheric form.

True forgiveness is a potentized act of tolerance—tolerance that penetrates deeper in the will. Forgiveness obliges us to pass through an experience of inner and outer powerlessness. This is what allows the forces of the lower ego to withdraw. Through repeated effort the higher ego can assert itself over the lower ego. Since it is only possible to forgive by connecting to our Spirit Self, we need to resort to a discipline that connects us to it, hence to repeated exertions of the will. That some people may be able to do that without a particular discipline simply means that they are already sufficiently imbued and inspired by the Spirit Self in their ego through grace resulting from previous incarnations.

As the ego needs the sense organs of the physical body, so does the Spirit Self need the perceptive organs of the etheric body. There it can help dissolve the structures of the doubles (partly etheric and astral). In forgiving we liberate the destructive and darkening elements in our etheric body, initiating a conscious work upon our double. Outwardly, through forgiveness we act one step deeper in the Mysteries of evil in our time. We send back into the world as much goodness as it was robbed off by the evil act.

This work upon the etheric body may not at first form the supersensible organs of perception but it can make us receptive to the macrocosmic forces that emanate from the Christ. On the basis of the examples he studied, Prokofieff concludes: “The path of forgiveness is the most direct and surest path whereby the spiritual forces of the etheric

Christ may flow into modern earthly civilization, while the person himself is sooner or later enabled to gain a clairvoyant experience of Him.”⁽¹⁴⁾

Forgiveness is prepared with self-forgiveness that can take various forms. Forgiveness towards self or “towards the spiritual world” comes in one way through the acceptance of blows of destiny. These most often call us to acceptance of a choice we have made in the spiritual world [at the Cosmic Midnight] before descending into incarnation. But self-forgiveness extends to all acts small or large that we have generated in this life and that we regret. Through the Mystery Dramas and elsewhere Steiner calls attention to the essential and productive attitude of *remorse*. Remorse that mourns our shortcomings for the outcome generated in the world sets us on the path to self-improvement. Remorse tied to the idea of our lost perfection is ultimately egotistic and will only generate guilt and hinder our further development. With remorse we balance the past; with forgiveness we prepare the future.

The second stage of forgiveness along the path of the will corresponds in the Christian Rosicrucian path to the attainment of imaginative knowledge. In the third stage of the path of forgiveness we endeavor to take the karma of another individual or group upon ourselves, allowing the ego to act upon our astral body. A step on the way to this goal lies in developing a sense of responsibility for the actions of fellow human beings or groups/institutions. In moving from forgiveness to taking on the karma of other people up to a group, we rely on the help of the Life-Spirit. This third stage corresponds in the Christian Rosicrucian path to inspiration knowledge

In the fourth stage of the path of forgiveness, we participate in bearing the karma of the whole of humanity. It is the stage in which the ego can act consciously upon itself. Steiner’s life illustrates this stage along the path. What the initiate tried to offer through his life was a true regeneration of the cultural sphere, a regeneration of the power of thinking, offered to the whole of mankind. In order to achieve this task he had to endure opposition from all quarters and develop enormous capacity for forgiveness and sacrifice. At this stage of the path we reach the revelation of Christ in the higher spiritual world. The initiate thus perceives Christ out of his own ego, as the archetype of his ego. This corresponds to the stage of intuitive knowledge in the Christian Rosicrucian path.

The way in which Prokofieff outlines the four stages is illustrated in the Mystery Plays. Let us find a few pointers to this correspondence. In the Mystery Plays tolerance appears in the initial stages of development through the acceptance of other viewpoints in our life. It comes more naturally in Thomasius's ability to experience in his soul the different viewpoints of the individuals that surround him. It forms the center of an intense inner struggle in Capesius and Strader—among all characters those who most need to educate their senses—profoundly influenced by the materialism reigning in modern institutions of learning.

Forgiveness is rarely mentioned in the plays, or not at all. In its place two other ideas are highlighted. Much of what we call forgiveness is shown as the need to embrace our karmic obligations. Seeing from the perspective of karma and reincarnation, we could talk of *atonement*. Maria and Thomasius are atoning in the present life for the results of decisions taken in their two previous incarnations—the Templar and the Egyptian. Maria in particular shows a complete readiness to amend the consequence of decisions in earlier lives. Thus, for example, she realizes the need to support Capesius whom she worked to estrange from Thomasius's soul in the Middle Ages.

Where true forgiveness is called upon, the Mystery Dramas speak of *soul sacrifice*. This attitude is present in Theodora both in her Templar life and in the present. Not surprisingly she is the one who can announce the coming of the etheric Christ—albeit in a trance-like state of consciousness. Maria takes on soul sacrifice for the sake of those she has joined in previous lives. The higher ego in the act of forgiveness moves toward an active remembrance of the prebirth resolves taken at the Cosmic Midnight that come in as flashes and are soon forgotten in that sphere and in this life. Maria also takes soul sacrifice a step further in the last play. When Capesius and Thomasius fall short of their commitment, she knows that she has to take all the more responsibilities and step in for both of them.

At a still higher level lies the cooperation between the Brothers in the Council. Here are individuals who have taken tasks and responsibilities for larger groups of human beings or for the whole of humanity. The decisions that are taken in the Temple are reached in a completely dispassionate mode. They don't derive from personal preference

but are offered in response to a call from the spiritual world, out of an inescapable inner necessity.

What the Mystery Dramas add to Prokofieff's analysis of the path of forgiveness is the weight that knowledge of previous lives plays in this process. Of course forgiveness can be offered without it, either through the presence of a strong Spirit-Self or through the education of the will that supports it. However, the central message of the Mystery Dramas lies in that a karmic lesson is truly learned when the soul can reach objective knowledge on what seems to be a purely subjective matter, our biography. The example of Maria and Johannes is quite enlightening in this perspective. Through the four plays we are offered the picture of their previous Templar incarnation and inklings of their connection through the Mysteries of Hibernia. However, the root causes lie deeper in the Egyptian incarnation, of which we learn only at the last play. The first revelations are rungs of a ladder inasmuch as they help the two to move further in their spiritual development. The denouement cannot occur through the previous revelations alone; the last tableau of the Egyptian initiation is necessary for a permanent result and change.

Whether we approach reconciliation from the act of forgiveness or from the perspective of atonement generated by the understanding of our deeper essence in our previous lives, we find many commonalities in the common goals attained. The path of forgiveness and the path indicated in the Mystery Dramas ultimately call us to reorder and harmonize our karma by affecting our perception of the world, and through the contributions that originate in our deeds. In this they correspond to what Prokofieff characterizes as the "path of the will through thinking," the education of the will that acts in the fulfillment of our karma through the ordering effect of thinking.

We can say that in the Rosicrucian Path we educate our thinking through the will, whereas we strengthen our will through thinking in the path of forgiveness. In the first we aim at rendering our thinking truly free. In the second we aim at liberating our will from the constraints to which the double binds it. In concluding, Prokofieff compares the two paths to the two serpents around the Mercurial caduceus. He points out that the Rosicrucian path helps us cultivate the inner life. The path of forgiveness is directed primarily to a cultivation of the outer forms of life. This is precisely what was cultivated

in those communities that absorbed the teachings of Manichaeism—Cathars, Albigenses—and in great measure by the Templars.

Other authors have given weight to the idea of a social path. We will refer here to two of them, Harry Salman and Margreet van den Brink, in order to bring out new elements that characterize the second path. In addition we will look at a practical tool on this path, that which can be characterized as the “helping conversation” or “counseling conversation” (authors’ characterization).⁽¹⁵⁾

The Path of Social Development

Ever since the end of the nineteenth century, because of humanity’s collective crossing of the threshold, the world-stage is taking the place of the precinct of the Mysteries. Modern life can be understood as a collective Mystery Drama.

The individual path (of cognition) leads us first to the Lower Guardian that shows us our true nature. It is the path that Steiner outlined in *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*. The path of social development leads us first to the Higher Guardian, through whom we can have inklings of the true being of the other and the nature of our collaboration. Consequently we are thrown back to the Lower Guardian, in the awareness of the distance between the goal to achieve and the obstacles presented by our lower nature.

The social path awakens through the perception of the suffering of others. Here we cross the threshold when we fall asleep to the other—in the archetypal phenomenon of communication of which we will say more later. It is the other human being who leads us into the spiritual world. We can thus learn to perceive our own double when we reach to that place in which the Christ unites us with the other. The social path is also the path through which we forgive ourselves and others, and carry the karma of others.

Van den Brink also calls the path of social development the “path of the crisis.” She also sees that the path of social development is that stage in which the individual path to the Christ, first in thinking then in feeling, finally enters into the will. The social path gives “form and content” to the personal path and manifests into our actions. It’s a path in the realm of morality.

Van den Brink’s analysis allows us to move further into the social path through her practical application of it in the realm of dialogue. Nowadays the need for this path

through dialogue is seen in the fact that we are all longing to be seen, heard, and understood by others; we want to awake to our higher self in the way that often happens when another person hears us fully. However, we are aware both of our inability to hear other people fully and of our fear, because the first experience is that of an encounter with our double leading us to the lesser Guardian of the Threshold. On the other hand, and almost by definition—we don't possess innate social skills. We can only cultivate them with patience. Therefore, we can only offer support—whether professionally or personally—once we have mastered both dialogue techniques and a measure of personal experiences with the Guardian.

Essentially the dialogue that anyone with communication skills can offer is a path through the layers of the soul from matter—the experiential level—to spirit awareness. In order for this path to reach completion, we must reclaim awareness of our experiences, raise them from the forgetfulness that comes from not having fully digested them—and ultimately having let them sink into our unconscious—first in our etheric and then, eventually into our physical with consequences for our health. The listener will help us free these memories from remaining unconscious and allow us to reconnect as well with our superconscious (our prebirth intentions). For this path to be true and fruitful it is important to let the experiences speak for themselves, rather than impose an intellectual layer of interpretation. Going from bodily experience to spirit awareness means moving through the layers of the soul, from the oldest (sentient soul) to the youngest (consciousness soul).

In the sentient soul (soul of experience) we first live through our sense perceptions, our subjective needs, emotions, impulses of the will—in short, the subjective stratum for our perception of the world. We become aware of ourselves inwardly. The second layer of the soul is the heart/mind soul. Through it we can reflect on our experiences and discriminate between the essential and the nonessential. We become intellectually and emotionally aware. In the consciousness soul we acquire deeper perspective of the importance of our experiences, of their truth and inner essence, and place these experiences in relationship to each other.

The above processes are amplified in deep and empathic conversation. To do this we have to go through the different layers of the soul without skipping stages. Let us

deepen what we have briefly outlined. We start from the sentient soul by retrieving the experience as clearly as possible: all that our senses perceived, our feelings, questions, needs, longings, ideals, impulses, etc. We relive our fears, sorrow, pain or pleasure, and enthusiasm. This is the first level of connection of the I with the spirit-self. This essential connection is bypassed if we try to move on to intellectualizing before re-experiencing. We will not be able to move further if we don't reach the sentient soul first. We can then look back upon the experiences by thinking about them: discriminating and ordering them, forming tentative hypotheses and conclusions. At this stage another difficulty surges, that of being able to let go of the fruits of our intellect. We need to sacrifice our earthly thinking. In effect, the next step is better taken after we let the whole content thus elaborated sink down and ripen out of its own processes. We then connect with the consciousness soul and we receive the previously elaborated content in the form of insights, answers, solutions, and a feeling for the deeper truth at a spiritual level. These are more than intellectual or speculative results. In the consciousness soul we distill an extract of the particular experience.

Having moved from ideas about the path to specific techniques, we will now move into another of these techniques, developed by Coenraad van Houten. The Dutch author and researcher has been looking at the complementarity of his two approaches of “Adult Learning” and “Destiny Learning” in order to add further aspects of the path of the will.⁽¹⁴⁾ The presence of the third path—that of “spiritual research”—should not cloud the issue. Spiritual research itself is only attained through the integration of the first two paths. Although we will talk of the path of Destiny Learning, I want to make it clear that this is a technique, a particular application or manifestation of the larger social path.

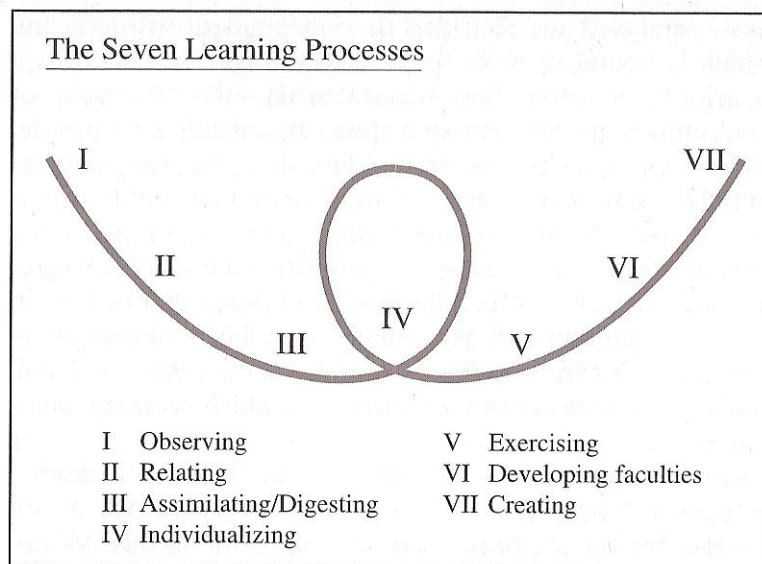
Destiny Learning as a Moral Technique

Both Adult Learning and Destiny Learning are based on the exploration of the seven life processes. Steiner has offered us the image of our twelve senses—five known outer senses and another seven more refined senses—as static in our organism. The case of the eye or the ear is a perfect illustration of this. They are like windows through which our soul looks out at the world. Through all the senses pulsate the life processes. What the

senses let through is further elaborated, turned into a living experience through the life processes.

The seven life processes are: breathing, warming, nourishing, secreting, maintaining, growing, and reproducing. There is a process of breathing, of warming, of nourishing, etc. of our seeing, of our hearing, of our sense of balance, etc. Likewise every life process affects each of the twelve senses. The first three processes reach us from the external world: breathing, warming, and nourishing. The process of secreting concerns the internal secretion that facilitates assimilation and absorption and also excretion. The last three processes characterize the inner life of every organism. What is taken from the world by the organism sustains first maintenance, then growth, and finally reproduction.

The life processes are at work in the first three cycles of seven years in the respective building of physical, etheric, and astral bodies up to the birth of the ego at age twenty-one. At this point the life processes are further freed from the body and made available for a new process of learning led by the conscious ego. Adult learning (“learning to learn process”) and destiny learning as they have been developed by Coenraad van Houten call on us to consciously enhance the life processes for the purpose of learning.



(From *Practising Destiny*, Coenraad van Houten)

Let us see how the life processes metamorphose in the seven learning processes of adult learning (see graph above). Breathing in the case of learning means taking in the external world, everything to which we specifically turn our attention through the senses. The extent to which we can do so can be enhanced by an education of our senses. Warming means adding a qualitative relationship to the given relationships to the senses. It is the warmth of our ego that awakens interest, and forms the intensity of connection essential for learning. In the steps of nourishing and secreting we take apart what we receive. We examine it, question it, compare it with our experiences. In brief this is the analytical part of the process of learning, the one that we are justified in taking from materialistic science. However, we need to move further than this step in secreting. This means engaging fully through the forces of our ego with what we have prepared thus far. This is a turning point in which we unite what comes from the outside and make it our one; we individualize it. To get past the external approach of materialistic science we need to realize that knowledge engages a desire to inwardly change. It puts in motion forces of will.

The next step is that of maintaining-practicing. In order to sustain change we need to use rhythm and repetition, through specially devised exercises and activities. We are in fact trying to stimulate new faculties, the object of the next phase/life process. To achieve new faculties we can devise sets of exercises that take in account both the nature of the subject at hand and of the inner hindrances that block our learning. The outcome and final stage—reproduction—is reached in the ability to bring forth what has been assimilated and re-elaborated in a purely individual way. We are then able to create something new with what we have taken in from the world. The last three life processes—stages of synthesis—stand as a complement to the scientific/analytic approach.

The above is one particular adaptation and methodology of the path of knowledge that students of anthroposophy embark upon, starting with *Philosophy of Freedom*, *Theosophy*, *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*, or *Occult Science*. The path of Destiny Learning explores that learning that comes from who we are, from the events in our lives. Whereas we start from what is universal and objective in Adult Learning, we turn to what is utterly personal and subjective in Destiny Learning. We can do that because we know that we want to reach that objective ground that forms the bedrock of a biography, what

we know from spiritual science as our previous incarnations. Under that light we are no longer the product of the physical environment and social and cultural forces. We are both a unique manifestation of individuality, but also the result of discernable forces at play in the universe and in our souls. The Mystery Dramas can serve as a blueprint in this perspective. No life in those plays follows the supposedly universal pattern of development, such as it is outlined in *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*. Who we are now derives from a higher karmic logic, from whom we were in the distant path, from what we set in motion in the present life, and what others contribute to our personal development. Let us see how that is the case from the perspective of Destiny Learning as a complementary approach to Adult Learning. We will look here at Destiny Learning as it is conducted in a workshop of three to four days (Destiny Learning 1). Steps 1 to 4 are part of this process. Steps 5, 6 and 7 (of Destiny Learning 2 and 3) will only be briefly mentioned.

Step	Life Process	Learning to Learn Process	Destiny Learning Process	
I	Breathing	Observing	Observing an event out of life, finding the gesture	} Destiny Learning I
II	Warming	Relating	Placing single event in biography, finding the symptoms of the being	
III	Nourishing	Digesting, assimilating	Finding the karmic cause and learning task for this life	
IV	Secreting	Individualizing	Acceptance, saying yes to destiny	
V	Maintaining	Exercising, practising	Practising transformation of your Double	} Destiny Learning II
VI	Growing	Growing faculties	Transforming relationships in the network of destiny	
VII	Reproducing	Creating something new	Ordering karma	} Destiny Learning III

(From *The Threefold Nature of Destiny Learning*, Coenraad van Houten)

Once again we start by educating the activity of our senses. We can do that by looking at a significant event in our biography as clearly and objectively as possible. We bring to mind every possible detail of setting, persons, environment, as well as feelings,

sensations, thoughts, etc. We breathe in the event. In the second step we place this event in the flow of our biography. In doing this we recognize it as something that belongs to us, even when it seems to belong to the random caprices of chance. It actually has a place in our biography and has contributed to shaping us for who we are. In fact many times it forms a cluster with other similar events in our lives and we can recognize a gesture common to all of them. This is why recurrent events, rather than the one-of-a-kind, are taken as points of departure of Destiny Learning. The next step is that of digesting—finding the causes and the learning task that emerge from this cluster of events. In this step we try to reach the deeper, originating causes in a previous life; we wrestle for self-knowledge. This stage is best supported through conversation, art and exercises, and through the help of a facilitator. The question that goes closely in hand with the previous one is now: “What is this event trying to tell me and what inner forces do I need to develop in order to integrate it into my life?” [What was the previous question?]

The next stage of individualizing/accepting our destiny pushes us to a step of determination of the will, towards a complete identification with the event. Whereas before I may have looked uncomfortably on it or even turned away from it, at this stage this is no longer possible. We now face all the ways in which the double hides from our consciousness, such as in denial or guilt. We can basically recognize the nature of Luciferic doubles that promote our love of self and estrange us from our real task. On the other are the Ahrimanic doubles that harden us and keep us as if imprisoned in the reality of the five senses, hardbound concepts, and recurrent patterns of behavior. We are in fact coming to a closer recognition of what lies behind both of them, the “second man in us” that orchestrates the events in our biography.

The next stage of work consists in maintaining/working at transforming our double. Through daily commitment we learn to recognize in which ways we are not free to meet new situations without preconditioned behavior. We can take on the practice of transforming our double with small increments, with what Destiny Learning calls “freer deeds,” actions we may plan carefully, knowing how much we can reasonably expect of ourselves. In fact, initially we could work at transforming the way in which we think of a person with whom we have hostility or difficulties. A next step may be confined to not avoiding him, greeting him, refraining from commenting at the first sentence, etc. In so

doing we may notice how the double reacts in us. At this stage journaling offers support to observation and knowledge of our inner dynamics, hence the ability to affect them and transform them.

The next steps move into the abilities that humanity will evolve more fully in the future: developing faculties of karmic perception and bringing harmony into one's karma. In the first instance we develop the ability to sense from our heart the forces of destiny. At this stage we have acquired enough familiarity with our double that it gradually takes on the role of guide, letting us know or sense what it is possible to carry out in our deeds and what is not yet ripe for action. In the last two stages we can become true agents for social change, first by developing a deeper sense for what a situation calls forth and later by perceiving the deeper links of destiny and developing the ability to work outside of the karmic ties created from the past—our “Moon karma.” In other words we can act truly freely and create new “Sun karma.”

What may have not clearly emerged from the above is the complementary approach to Adult Learning that Destiny Learning takes, because in this context we will not go into the specifics of how a Destiny Learning workshop or practice is conducted. Suffice to say that Destiny Learning is assisted through the help of a facilitator and the presence of a group. What counseling and countless peer processes know is that change and emancipation from our shadow/double is a process that requires support and encouragement. We do not change our behavior alone. Once more the example of the Mystery Dramas reechoes this concept—both in the way we can live this artistic creation as artists or experience it on stage. Many of those who participate to the process of Destiny Learning, through workshops or within ongoing groups, express having a concrete experience of what brotherhood can feel like.

The approach of Destiny Learning contrasts clearly with that of Adult Learning. The second path is mostly an individual path, even when groups can be used for facilitating its steps—e. g., study groups. The first path is indissolubly linked to group activity, given its nature and goals. The education of the will through thinking is accomplished daily in our human environment through the encounters and events that shape our individual destiny. It is not surprising to seek to create learning grounds within

a group format—to let the perception of our fellow human beings enrich our own perspective. In thinking we live in the realm of freedom; in the will in that which conveys the experience of brotherhood. In the last stages of destiny learning we awaken the heart-sensing that is capable to awaken karmic perception.

Reordering our karma lies in both awakening our recollection of previous lives and being able to atone for our karmic trespasses and offer soul-sacrifice in order to further the common good. Remembering our karmic past is the deepest and most lasting foundation from which the reordering of karma can follow. What we have said of the Mystery Dramas holds true in this regard. In fact we could say that Destiny Learning awakens the consciousness of being part of a daily Mystery Drama in which the links of destiny are progressively revealed. The direction of Destiny Learning, its ultimate goal, is the ability to act effectively in the social world, to inwardly know the impact that we can have within our closest circles, and to differentiate between what we can and what we cannot do.

We have seen the emphasis on tolerance and forgiveness on Prokofieff's side and the accent on connecting with destiny forces in the approach of Destiny Learning. Yet another emphasis comes from Harry Salman's and Margreet van den Brink's tentative definition of the "path of social development." They see this way as a complement to the path of schooling that Steiner outlined in *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*. Salman calls it the "heart-path" of the social impulse. He characterizes the two paths as the path to the outer world (the path of thinking) and the path to the inner world (the path of social development). He recognizes the first as the path of choice for the Aristotelian soul and the second as the path most likely chosen by the Platonic soul. A key aspect he perceives in the second path is the inner growth that results from dialogue and communication. Van den Brink makes this modality concrete in what some call "the helping conversation." Finally, van Houten outlines a path that is eminently social through the idea of recognizing the root of our difficulties in this life in their original causes in previous lives. Most authors see the two paths as complementary to each other. Van den Brink places the social path as a culmination of the individual path.

Extending forgiveness, connecting with destiny forces, offering soul sacrifice, atoning, and working at social development are in fact different facets of the same path. Different authors stress different aspects of a larger reality. All of these aspects are present in the “path of the Mystery Dramas,” because central to all of the above are the notions of karma and reincarnation. Every aspect of what we have presented above is even more potently present in the legacy of Steiner, to which we are striving to give a name. To get closer to that goal we will now move from Steiner’s second contribution to the understanding of karma (the Mystery Dramas in the period from 1910 to 1914) to the last one (years 1918 to 1924).

The Archetypal Social Phenomenon

What Prokofieff, Salman, Brüll, van den Brink, and van Houten outline from their own research can be further encompassed in Steiner’s work. To do this we will turn to aspects of his work that have not received deeper attention, partly because much of these came towards the end of his life and were not brought to an encompassing organic formulation—Steiner’s “karma exercises.” To begin, however, we will first overview a very general principle concerning human interaction: the “archetypal social phenomenon.” After these two steps we will move towards a larger characterization of the path of forgiveness or path of social development of which van den Brink’s counseling conversation or van Houten’s Destiny Learning are particular applications.

Towards the last years of his life, particularly from 1918 to 1924, Steiner repeatedly called the attention of members of the Anthroposophical Society to the importance of coming to know oneself in the encounter, starting in 1918 when he introduced the idea of the archetypal social phenomenon.

That we are truly entering a new territory when we tread the social path is made clear by Steiner on more than one occasion. “Well, social thinking is different from thinking out of the spirit. In the case of spiritual thinking everything depends from the development of the individuality.”⁽¹⁷⁾ There is a dichotomy in the contrast between thinking in the purely cognitive sphere and thinking in the social realm. To underline this dichotomy Steiner stresses how even those thinkers who significantly contributed to the path of knowledge—Hegel and Fichte—could offer little that could be any other than

damaging in the social sphere. There is no other way in the social art than what individuals work out of a common interest in each other and a common understanding. Steiner called the earnest interest toward another person the “golden impulse of social life.”⁽¹⁸⁾ This is what takes the place of the thinking that has its place in the individual path. In the social path this encounter and common understanding arise from a deeper understanding and practice of the archetypal social phenomenon.

Let us approach this central phenomenon of the social path that can be clearly articulated in what happens in a dialogue. This is the phenomenon through which Steiner described how when we speak, we put the listener to sleep and awaken to ourselves, and vice-versa. We sleep into the other in listening and awaken to ourselves in speaking. This means that our social impulses are strongest in our sleep, when we are least conscious. “Only that which continues to work out of sleeping into waking conditions is active as a social impulse in ordinary waking consciousness. . . . Thus there exists a permanent disposition to fall asleep precisely in order to build up the social structure of humanity.”

The deeper implications of the phenomenon can be gleaned through what Steiner tells us in the lecture “The Freeing of Man’s Being as the Foundation for a New Social Order.”⁽¹⁹⁾ Here Steiner speaks of what happens when we meet our fellow human beings not out of the forces of the blood, but out of meeting them consciously and sharing in the realm of the will. This sharing at the level of the will—understanding what lives in the will of the other—leads us towards a dim reawakening of the bond that exists between two individuals from a preceding incarnation. Naturally this needs to be understood in the right way and Steiner cautions us, “What manifests itself in this way emerges something like a dream.” Once again, this is so because we fall asleep into our fellow human being. However this “dream of repeated earthly lives” is very real. To enhance this understanding of the other we need to develop our abilities in social life by immersing ourselves lovingly into the other person.

We can now explore the process that is normally working below the threshold of consciousness, as Steiner explores it in his *Philosophy of Freedom*. When I interact with another person, I first of all take in the sensory perceptions at every possible level—sight, hearing, smell, etc. All of this sets in motion a train of thought. Through the percept we

move to the formulation of a concept and realize that this is not likely to be what appears to external senses. Something else is present that the senses cannot immediately reveal. In the act of appearing to my perception, the phenomenon extinguishes itself. This compels the observer to extinguish his own thinking. In fullest consciousness one would then be able to grasp what thinks in us—the thinking of the other. “The immediate percept, extinguishing itself as a sensory appearance, is grasped by my thinking, and this is a process lying completely below my consciousness, which consists in my thinking being replaced by the other thinking. Through the self-extinguishing of the sensory appearance, the separation between the two spheres of consciousness is actually suspended.”⁽²⁰⁾ This phenomenon mirrors the extinction of consciousness that happens in dreamless sleep. We cannot perceive it because the movement between the extinction and the reawakening of our own consciousness follow one another so quickly that they do not enter our consciousness.

From the above we are led to understand that we are truly social when we fall asleep in the other; after that we need to rescue something from sleeping into our waking consciousness. In sleep, in our astral body we find ourselves all together with all other people in our lives but not conscious. In the life after death, in kamaloka, we actually awake in the perception of the world of the other person. Social processes are thus “death processes”; hence, processes that we normally resist.

In a deeper conversation we echo more consciously the processes that occur in the life after death. We come closer to an understanding of the speaker’s past and how his intentions carry him into the future. In effect we have intimations of their and our own karma. The speaker fills the listener with his past and future that is present in the very same intention that draws him to speak. The same is true for the listener as well: his past and future come forward. If we can receive each other in full empathy we can reach an insight into the person’s situation and the task he/she needs to face. Moreover the conversation has the ability to awaken the listener himself to his/her true self. Through compassion we become especially aware of our ego. What takes place outside of us also occurs at the same time within us.

This archetypal social phenomenon has a central place in anthroposophical social science. What is said about conversation is true also for any encounter, silent or spoken.

Our social impulses are strongest in our sleep, when we are least conscious, when we are asleep. In wanting to stay awake we manifest our antisocial tendencies, and in fact this is the prevalent mission of the present time, that of awakening a sense of our true self. This antisocial tendency and necessity contributes to illness in our body. The social nature in us contributes to our healing, and that cannot be done without, in a certain measure, going to sleep.⁽²¹⁾ The above explains in great measure why socialization is one of modern day's greatest yearnings and difficulties.

The assertion of the antisocial impulses will continue for many more centuries, in fact up to the thirtieth century. We must therefore learn to know the other person more consciously. This cannot be done through the subconscious in our feelings. Our current of antipathies and sympathies does not guide us any better into an understanding of the other than our thinking does. In our will we direct our actions through what we call love, which for the most part is self-love. This self-love is antisocial and can only be transformed through self-discipline. So, how are we supposed to develop that which our natural constitution in the age of the consciousness soul most naturally resists?

In order to overcome our natural antisocial tendencies in the encounters with others, we must move away from our natural inclination to form concepts about the being of the other and move towards developing images.⁽²²⁾ Through imaginations we will acquire a deeper faculty of empathy. Steiner insists that in the future the social life can only be founded on a development of our imagination. When we meet another person a picture shall arise from the other person. "But this requires of course the heightened interest that I have often described to you as the foundation of social life, in which each person should take in the other person." Here we must find the social impulses. In fact Steiner reaches further into a description of the sacramental aspect of this type of encounter, what he calls "the capacity to be mystically stimulated" in the encounter with the other human being.⁽²³⁾

Now, the question that surges from reading the above is precisely "How does Steiner expect that we are to develop this heightened interest and this capacity of imagining the other human being as objectively as possible?" An answer to this appears in the same lecture where he speaks of what is now known as the "after-image." In order to let the after-image reach us, "It is most important of all that the instinct shall be

implanted in people to *look back* more frequently during this life, but in the right way. To do that we need to immerse ourselves with real love in the other person” (emphasis added). “This has such a germinating power over us that we really acquire the imaginative forces necessary to confront the contemporary human being in such a way that in him the thing is manifest that appears to us only after many years in our *backward survey* of those figures with whom we have lived together” (emphasis added). Notice that what happens naturally after death in kamaloka is produced in life on earth by the conscious act of will of looking back. Steiner concludes by saying that this is the beginning of real brotherhood. In fact brotherhood only has a place when we begin to carry the picture of the other person within our soul. This is the kind of elective affinity that replaces old bonds of blood. We are coming closer to answering the question we formulated in the sentence quoted above, that “the instinct shall be implanted in people to *look back more frequently* during this life, but in the right way” (emphasis added). It is obvious that this next step must be more than ideas or intentions.

Steiner looked at two broad ways to reassert the balance between social and antisocial forces. He saw that this could be done externally, as devised through an understanding of social threefolding and the application of new social forms derived from it and inwardly, through a repeated effort to awaken the slumbering, unconscious social tendencies. The second option means in effect a conscious working with and enhancing of the archetypal social phenomenon, a building of the imaginations that lead to the heightened interest that does not arise out of our everyday consciousness. Social tendencies need to be consciously nurtured through repeated effort. The interest in other human beings can only be acquired through conscious effort and that is why Steiner devised particular exercises.

Steiner’s Karma Exercises

In order to be more conscious in the encounter, Steiner has formulated many practices and exercises designed for awakening interest, acquiring objectivity, and increasing our understanding of people and events in our lives. In the last twenty-three years of his life, Steiner struggled to bring forth a lively understanding of the ideas of karma and reincarnation. In his intention, central to this attempt were the exercises that can awaken a

sense for individual recognition of the forces of destiny in our biography and ultimately the reawakening of memories of previous lives. Steiner's effort never received the consecration or ultimate form that the path of thinking finds in the *Philosophy of Freedom* or *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*. The reason for this could be that Steiner barely managed to complete laying out important blocks of this edifice in the last year of his life. Nevertheless, a whole, coherent direction emerges once we look at some of these exercises, arranging them as it were from the most immediate to the most demanding. This review is in no way exhaustive, just indicative of the breadth of Steiner's work in the matter.

A first exercise that forms a prelude to the series that we will examine is designed to awaken gratitude and a sense of perspective concerning our personal achievements.⁽²⁴⁾ In it Steiner asks us to turn back to an overview of our life and see what part other people have played in it, by detecting how much we owe to our parents, relatives, friends, teachers, colleagues, etc. The exercise should lead to the realization of how much in our life we owe to others. Repeated over time, it allows us to develop an imagination for those people who play an important part in our life, an imagination that points to their deeper being. A variation on this exercise is offered in *Social and Anti-social Forces in the Human Being*, and goes a step further.⁽²⁵⁾ We are asked to bring before our mind's eye images of those who have played a role in our lives, either directly and positively or indirectly through hindrance and opposition—as vividly as possible. We should be able to develop an objective sense of our indebtedness. Steiner has this gripping comment to offer: “It is extremely important, for the ability to inwardly picture another individual without love or hate, to give space to another individual within our souls, as it were, this is a faculty which is diminishing week by week in the evolution of humanity. It is a capacity which we are losing completely, by degrees; we pass one another by without arising the slightest mutual interest.” By invigorating this ability we develop a truer picture of the people in our lives, in effect an imagination of them. This will develop further in the ability to “relate ourselves imaginatively to those we meet in the present.”

An exercise that forms the prelude to the so-called lesser karma exercise is the one Steiner described in the same lecture quoted above, as a complement to the first. Whereas in the exercise above we are seeking to develop an objective and imaginative

perception of others, here the same is true about ourselves. In this instance we will refer to a particular stage of our lives, and immerse ourselves objectively into that time, as if we were spectators to ourselves. In so doing we are freeing the perception of ourselves in the present from the images that bind us to the past and that lead us to identify our ego with our life experiences, rather than to the intimations of our higher self. We thus develop an imaginative picture of ourselves, and lessen the effects of the egoism that naturally develops in the age of the consciousness soul. None of this can be achieved without repeated effort. “According to true occult science, nothing can be done by remaining in place, for one forgets things and must always be cultivating them afresh. This is just as it should be, for fresh efforts need to be continually made.”

A next simple exercise—the so-called lesser karma exercise—consists of looking back to one single event in our life, one that is seemingly due to chance or to something that we did not wish to happen. Steiner spoke of this exercise in more than one place.⁽²⁶⁾ The example that Steiner offers is that of a shingle falling from a roof onto our head. He asks us to imagine the deed of the “second man in us” who loosens the shingle from the roof just in time for it to fall on our heads when we pass under it. In other words, he wants us to picture that we have planned our lives before our birth in such a way as to come to certain critical turning points on earth. When we enter the exercise for the first times, this second man is clearly seen as an invention, something artificially conjured up. However, he grows and evolves in us to the point that we cannot escape the feeling that he really is within us, accompanied with the growing realization that we have really wanted these events to come to pass. The memory of the fact that we have wanted these events is all but erased from our consciousness and the exercise, repeated over many life events, serves to awaken it. We can thus deepen an inner conviction and feeling for our karmic biography. Cultivating this feeling bestows deeper inner strength and modifies our attitude towards events we may have previously confronted with fear. We acquire a certain peacefulness and acceptance together with the feeling that everything our life has a purpose. We start taking responsibility for our destiny and stop blaming parents, friends, enemies, or random events for those things that cause us unhappiness.

The lesser karma exercise is developed to the extreme in the exercise that Steiner offered in the lecture of January 23, 1912.⁽²⁷⁾ In this exercise we are asked to have a

retrospective look upon our life, see our propensities both for what comes naturally and what does not. We are asked to mostly focus on what we could not develop, on what became of us in spite of our contrary desires, of everything that we wanted to flee from and have not managed to. When that image of this contrary being has been carefully built up, then we are asked to immerse ourselves in this being and completely identify with it. From this we will derive some level of understanding for something that does not come from this life but from previous incarnations. In this instance we are no longer looking at a separate undesired event in our life but at the sum total of all undesired events, at a whole gesture within our being.

This basic idea appears in a slightly different form and more limited fashion in *Social and Anti-social Forces in the Human Being*.⁽²⁸⁾ Here we are asked to go back to an earlier stage of our lives and look at ourselves as objectively as possible, as if we were looking at another person. The goal of the exercise is to free ourselves from identifying our ego with our experiences and carry their weight in the present.

An exercise that is somehow the reverse of the lesser karma exercise consists in consciously looking back at what did not happen, at what we were spared. The graphic example consists in looking at what held us back to look at a flower or at the landscape, seconds before a boulder detached from the cliff above and passed a few yards ahead of us, thereby avoiding us. In less dramatic manner, there are countless encounters that would not have happened in our lives were it not for delays, changes of plans or last minute decisions. Observing these events leads us to break away from a strictly mechanistic cause-and-effect mentality and develop an ability to perceive the chain of events that constantly unfolds in front of our eyes by virtue of the forces of karma.

An enhancement of the “shingle on the head” exercise appears in *Secrets of the Threshold*.⁽²⁹⁾ There Steiner asks us to go back over our last three or four weeks, or better, the last three to four months. We look at everything that has taken place in this period of time. In doing this we lay aside the idea that any undesired event was the result of an injustice caused to us. Likewise we lay aside any self-justifications we could invoke for our shortcomings. In brief, we lay all responsibility for our life at our feet. This exercise awakens us to a new relationship with the spiritual world, namely, a relationship with the “second man in us” that arranges the events in our lives.

We will continue this series with two exercises specifically designed for the perception of previous lives, both of them given to us by Steiner in 1924. The first could be called the “Moon-Saturn-Sun man exercise.”⁽³⁰⁾ This can be applied to another person or to oneself. Here it is a matter of peeling layers of the personality, of seeing deeper and deeper into the real human nature, rather than what our senses present us of the human being, by looking at the threefoldness of willing, feeling, and thinking. In meditation we first look at the person by disregarding everything that he achieves in life by virtue of what he can accomplish through his arms and legs: where he goes, where he lived, what he does professionally, how he moves. One focuses rather on temperament, mood, way of thinking, etc. It is a way to render the man transparent to everything that works in his will. Behind the picture of the individual thus elaborated starts to shine the spiritual Moon, everything that works from the Moon sphere upon the person.

In the next stage we further disregard what comes from his life of emotions, from the temperament, everything of a soul nature, and further also what the man receives through his senses. All that is left is the way the person thinks. At this point the whole of the rhythmic system has been rendered transparent and behind shines what comes through the spiritual Sun. In the final stage we also disregard what comes from the person’s thinking in order to behold what shines behind the man thus made wholly “transparent” and one beholds the impulses shining from Saturn. At that moment one can start seeing the individual as a spiritual being and start perceiving his karma.

A final exercise is the so-called four days/three nights exercise or the “greater karma exercise.”⁽³¹⁾ Here it is a matter of bringing back to memory an event from daily life that may or may not involve another person. It is a matter of depicting it inwardly, or “painting it spiritually” as Steiner puts it, by recreating in greatest detail all the impressions received by our senses. If it is a person, one re-creates inwardly the way in which she moved, the quality, pitch, and tone of her voice, words used, gestures, smells, etc. This experience is taken into the night and repeated the following two days. The image is first given shape by the astral body in the external ether. From there the next morning the image is impressed into the etheric body. One awakens with definite feelings and the impression that the image wants something from us. It grows real in us. The etheric body continues to work on the image. On the third day the image is impressed

into the physical body. There the image is presently spiritualized. Steiner describes the experience of the day as a cloud in which the person moves. It gives rise to the feeling of being part of the picture itself. At first we feel part of the picture but with our will paralyzed, frozen as it were. This experience then evolves and becomes sight, an objective image. This will be the image of the event of the previous life that was the root cause of the event in the present incarnation. An experience of this kind will most likely not arise until the exercise is carried out a good number of times.

Before moving further, we can look at the contrast between lesser and greater karma exercises. The distinction is significant. The first stage is one of “taking responsibility for our lives”; the second leads to precise knowledge. Deciding to work with forces of destiny entails a first great effort of education of the will—usually resisted by our soul—of reconnecting with our prebirth resolves. Before incarnating we have been offered a preview of the challenges to come and we have accepted them with joy and earnestness in order to advance our karma and the karma of those we love. A veil of forgetfulness is drawn upon this experience in our lives on earth, and we have to struggle long and hard to recapture knowledge of our prebirth intentions that enlivens meaning in our lives. The lesser karma exercises reconnects us with our prebirth intentions in our life before birth. It is also a means to anticipate what normally occurs after death in the kamaloka condition. Taking responsibility means being willing to live in the consequence of our actions in their full ramifications, hence also to experience how these actions have affected other human beings.

A deeper level of resolve has been attained at the so-called Cosmic Midnight. This is an experience that we cannot always undergo in full consciousness. It is during the Cosmic Midnight that we behold the full dimension of our humanity. Recollection of our previous lives forms an important part of it as we saw in the Mystery Dramas. It is this deeper level that leads us to the objective knowledge that the greater karma exercise addresses. The distinction between lesser and greater karma exercises also matches Prokofieff’s assertion that it is not necessary to know about anthroposophy in the first stages of the path of forgiveness up to the lesser karma exercise. Exertion of the will through repeated practice of exercises or deeds that we do not naturally feel inclined to

accomplish forms the foundation for this path. Deeper spiritual knowledge, however, becomes necessary once we want to move further to the root causes in previous lives.

We have retraced in steps the activity that a perception of our karma necessitates. Let us try to find some guidelines and commonalities among all of the exercises. In the first series of exercises we try to recapture either an event in time or move back in time to a few weeks or few months or even to the whole of our life (gratitude exercise). In the most meditative exercises we then move recollection to its furthest extremes, to the primal cause of our karma, to our previous lives. All of the above form in fact an extension of the basic archetypal exercise of the “rückschau,” the exercise of going back over the events of the day in reverse order. In this instance we focus on the purely factual, leaving aside anything that may be of a feeling- or will-evaluation nature.

What the rückschau and all of the above exercises have in common is the idea of looking back to the essence of our “being in time.” What psychology sees as causes in our early childhood and upbringing, spiritual science seeks in the apprehension of our previous lives. We ourselves are the primary cause, not our environment. This is why letting go of blame and assuming responsibility, developing empathy and self-empathy, are fruitful preliminary exercises before attempting to retrieve memories of previous lives.

In the above exercises we have further retraced the path that is outlined in the evolving dynamic outlined from *The Portal of Initiation* to *The Soul's Awakening*. The whole of Steiner's intention behind the spreading of the teachings of karma, the writing of the Mystery Dramas, and the assignment of exercises and practices finds its expression in man's ability to follow the path of “spirit-recollection” or “spirit-recalling” resounded in the words of the *Foundation Stone*. In the first panel of the meditation we find mention of: “Practice spirit-recalling / in depths of soul / Where in the wielding will / Of World-creating / Thine own I / Comes to Being / Within God's I.” And further: “Let there ring from the heights / What in the depths is echoed / Speaking: / Ex Deo nascimur.” These sentences indicate that through the path of spirit recollection we can in fact ideally endeavor to retrace our steps toward the time in which incarnation first began, the Lemurian Epoch, the time in which we were “born out of God” (“Ex Deo nascimur”) and

the “I comes to Being Within God’s I.” This is why spirit recollection is the name I will adopt for describing the overarching impulse of which the path of forgiveness or the path of social development are particular manifestations or characterizations. The helping conversation or Destiny Learning are particular techniques for acquiring skills of spirit recollection.

In the above we have characterized a path fully distinct from the traditional path of schooling, or path of knowledge. The formulation of this contrast only clearly appears at the end of Steiner’s life. However, we can also retrace the complementarity of the two paths in Steiner’s earlier work. While he focused on the path of schooling or path of knowledge, the path of spirit recollection played a subsidiary role. That is the place of the six basic subsidiary exercises, next to the specific meditations and exercises that form the essence of the path of knowledge in *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* (e. g., the seed meditation revealing the forces of growth of the plant and the meditation on the plant’s decay in chapter 2). The six basic exercises were introduced in *Occult Science* (chapter 5, “Cognition of the Higher Worlds: Initiation”). These are: control of thought, control of feeling, control of the will, positivity, open-mindedness, and harmonious overall integration of the previous five. Among the aim of the exercises is this stated goal as a preparation for spiritual training: “Whoever, in this way, endeavors to regulate his soul-life will also attain the possibility of self-observation through which he observes his own affairs with the same tranquility as if they were those of others.” It is in this context that Steiner also introduced the rückschau or daily-review exercise. Similar to the six exercises are the “seven requirements” previously expressed by Steiner in *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* (chapter 5, “Requirements for Esoteric Training”). These were: improvement of physical, mental, and spiritual health; looking at our shortcomings rather than those of others; realizing that thoughts and feelings are as important as deeds we carry in the outer world; acquiring conviction of our soul-spiritual nature as the foundation of our true being; steadfastness to our outer and inner commitments and detachment from results; developing a sense of gratitude for all that we receive. The seventh is a recapitulation and synthesis of the six.

Let us bring this line of research to a conclusion. We will bring forth characterizations expressed by Steiner both before and after the Christmas Conference.

In the lecture of February 6, 1923, we are introduced to the contrast between the “path of Saturn” and the “path of the Moon.”⁽³²⁾ To refer to the path of thinking Steiner takes his start from *Philosophy of Freedom*. Here he describes the process through which thinking is resurrected from a passive activity (dead thinking) into a path of perception of the spiritual when the thinker tries to apprehend the relationship between thinking and himself (pure thinking). Here he describes “how the will strikes into the otherwise passive realm of thought, stirring it awake and making the thinker inwardly active.” One can therefore find the sources of ethical and moral impulses from pure thinking. This is the path that takes the human being beyond Saturn into the universe (the path to the macrocosm). Then he continues “in that book [*Philosophy of Freedom*] I limited the discussion entirely to the world of the senses, keeping more advanced aspects for later works because matters like these have to be gradually developed.”

The first path is then contrasted with the one in which “one can advance on the opposite side [microcosm] by entering deeply into the will to the extent of becoming wholly quiescent, by becoming a pole of stillness on the motion one otherwise engenders in the will.” Instead of becoming an unconscious part of the world movement, one can consciously come to a standstill. Through this “one succeeds in keeping the soul still while the body moves through space, succeeds in being active in the world while the soul remains quiet, carries activity and at the same time quietly observes it, then thinking suffuses the will, just as the will previously suffused thinking.” The second path (Moon path) is what allows one to separate the will from the physical body. “One learns to say ‘You harbor in your will sphere a great variety of drives, instincts and passions. But . . . they belong to a different world that merely extends into this one, a world that keeps its activity quite separate from everything that has to do with the sense world.’ [The preceding quote is missing an ending single quote after ‘You harbor...]

Steiner describes the two paths of inner development and then says, “I am only giving you a sketch of these matters today because I want to characterize the third phase of anthroposophy.” By this he refers to the historical phase in which more and more individuals working out of anthroposophy carried the deepest yearning to undertake

projects in the world. This attempt was followed by tensions leading to the break within the society, and the majority of young people forming of the Free Anthroposophical Society. It is symptomatic that Steiner introduced the second path in relation to a time in anthroposophical history in which one can clearly see the tension and contrast that came to the surface between groups that oriented themselves in different ways into their esoteric strivings.

New, key elements about this contrast of being could only be added after the Christmas Conference. What Steiner characterized only in a sketch is deepened in his Leading Thoughts in various stages. We will turn first to Leading Thoughts 95 to 99, quoting extensively from them, and then to the letter 17 of July 13, 1924, “Understanding of the Spirit; Conscious Experience of Destiny.”

Leading thought 95 (Sept 21, 1924) expresses: “In the manifestation of the Will, Karma works itself out. But its working remains in the unconscious. By lifting to conscious imagination what works unconsciously in the Will, Karma is apprehended. Man feels his destiny within him.”

Leading Thoughts 98 and 99 (September 28, 1924) reiterate these notions by further expressing the key difference between karma from the past and future karma: “The Feeling and Willing of Thought contain the karmic outcome of past lives on Earth. The Thinking and Willing of the life of Feeling karmically determine man’s character. The Thinking and Feeling of the life of Will tear the present earthly life away from Karmic connections.” (LT 98) And further: “In the Feeling and Willing of Thinking man lives out his Karma of the past; in the Thinking and Feeling of Willing he prepares the Karma of the future.” (LT 99)

The above premises find a culmination in the letter 17 of July 6, 1924, “Understanding of the Spirit; Conscious Experience of Destiny.” Here Steiner contrasts again the two paths—previously defined as Saturn (cognitive) and Moon (will) paths. The first one is such that the human being can say to himself, “I am forming thoughts about what my senses reveal to me as the world,” and he can experience himself in his thinking, and therefore become conscious of the self. In the other mode one directs one’s own attention to the inner world, “then those events emerge into consciousness which belong to our life’s destiny, and in which our human self has flowed along from the point

of time in which our memory goes back. In following up the events of his destiny, a man experiences his own existence.” The human being who experiences this enhanced memory can tell himself, “I with my own self have experienced something that destiny brought to me.” This second modality awakens the consciousness that one is not alone in one’s destiny, and that the world enters into the expression of one’s will. Therefore one goes from experiencing oneself to experiencing the world.

To recapitulate the contrast, through thinking of the world one can experience oneself; through diving into oneself one can experience the world. So the one who takes the latter path does not lose himself in the world of his soul, as he would in false mysticism, but he can receive a feeling of communion with the world even from the starting point of his own experience. Finally, this means acquiring the feeling of receiving one’s I from the world. And Steiner concludes, “Anthroposophy finds the self by showing how the sense-world reveals to man not only sense perceptions but also the after-effects of his life before birth and his former earthly lives.”

From the extensive quotes above we can detect that in the space of one year alone, from 1923 to 1924, Steiner moves from a general to a much deeper characterization of the path of willing (through thinking). This was made possible by the background offered through the teachings of karma and reincarnation after the Christmas Conference.

In the path of knowledge, meditation and the whole of anthroposophy form the essential foundation that accompanies the pupil in his higher understanding of how the spirit permeates everything that we behold through the senses. To this are added as an important complement the six basic exercises.

The reverse of the above can be said of the path of the will. Here the exercises we have described—and other similar ones—form the essential core of the path. The whole of anthroposophy and even knowledge of karma and reincarnation—as important as they may be—form the complement. In fact, to walk at least the first stages of the path of the will it is not necessary to know anthroposophy. In *The Occult Significance of Forgiveness* Prokofieff offers examples of individuals who practice the path of forgiveness without any knowledge of anthroposophy.⁽³³⁾ The author has offered abundant evidence of the above in *A Revolution of Hope*, chapter 6, where he describes various moral techniques

that have emerged in the American continent: Twelve Steps, Hellinger's Family Constellations, Nonviolent Communication, Appreciative Inquiry, World Café, Future Search, Theory U, Peacemaking Circles, etc. Many others also exist, such as the field of Life-coaching, Playback Theater, and Dynamic Facilitation. Certainly anthroposophy adds strength to those who engage in the path of the will, and anthroposophical knowledge becomes essential in later stages of the path.

In the approaches and techniques of spirit-recollection given by Prokofieff, van Houten, Salman, and others, the disciplines and social tools are aimed at rendering the encounter more conscious. Social collaboration lies at the center of these approaches, as authors like Salman and van den Brink indicate about the social path. Nonviolent Communication or van den Brink's helping conversation offer tools for a true Goethean conversation through an enhanced understanding of the archetypal social phenomenon. They offer individuals the possibility to take full responsibility for the circumstances of their incarnation. Coenraad van Houten's Destiny Learning can be equated to a four-day/three night exercise carried with the help of a group and the guidance of a facilitator. It allows us to reach the second part of the path: knowledge of aspects of previous lives.

Steiner's exercises form the larger archetype of what we have seen in the applications (tools for moral imagination) that have appeared particularly in van Houten and van den Brink's work, Nonviolent Communication, Twelve Steps, etc. (See appendix.) In van den Brink's helping conversation we can recognize the exercises leading to the lesser karma exercise. Everything we do for ourselves in the exercises is here done in the facilitated dialogue or enhanced conversation. We start from recreating and reliving past events. We then elevate the experience, above all the element of sympathy or antipathy, and finally distill an extract and promote the reverence and attitude of mind that promotes spiritual insight. In the end we can say that what emerges from this conversation is very much the same that we would retrieve from Steiner's exercises up to the lesser karma exercise. The insight that we formulate in a "potentized dialogue" is equivalent to what comes to the surface of consciousness after we practice the exercises repeatedly. Coenraad van Houten's Destiny Learning complements the other step of the approach that offers us access to the greater karma exercises in conjunction with the use of the archetypal social phenomenon.

From the above we can outline two variations on the path of spirit recollection. The first lies in individual work through Steiner's exercises of spirit recollection, those we have mentioned earlier on; the second uses the blueprint of these exercises in social activities involving two or more individuals. In Margreet van den Brink and Coenraad van Houten's work, as well as in those techniques that lie outside of anthroposophy, the conscious and elaborate art of enhancing what naturally occurs in the archetypal social phenomenon serves as support for connecting with the forces of destiny and opens the door for an understanding of the root causes in previous lifetimes.

APPENDIX: FOUR APPLICATIONS BASED ON THE SEVEN LIFE PROCESS

The 7 Life Processes

Breathing

Reproducing

Warming

Growing

Digesting

Maintaining

Secreting

To repeat, the seven life processes are: breathing, warming, nourishing, secreting, maintaining, growing and reproducing. There is a process of breathing, of warming, of nourishing, etc. of our seeing, of our hearing, of our sense of balance, and each of the twelve senses.

The first three processes reach us from the external world: breathing, warming and nourishing. The process of secreting concerns the internal secretion that facilitates assimilation and absorption and also excretion. The last three processes characterize the inner life of every organism. What is taken from the world by the organism sustains first maintenance, then growth and finally reproduction.

The following are four methodologies using the seven life processes.

D) 12 Step: AA, CoDa, Alanon, etc.

The following are the official Twelve Steps of AA:

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable

Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives to the care of God as we understood him.

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves

Step 5: Admitted to God, ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs

Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character

Step 7: Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings

Step 8: Made a list of all persons we harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Step 11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry the message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The whole life of an alcoholic or addict is an endless, repetitive act of denial of reality. (see tableau on p. 3) Initiating the Twelve Step process means being willing to acknowledge our powerlessness and open up to the idea of a higher power (steps one to three). This is just the first breach in the armor that surrounds the addict and that nullifies all his well-meaning efforts. It concerns the intellect. A second significant step comes from the individual involving himself with an open heart in making a moral inventory and letting himself be touched in his feelings through an understanding of the pain he has caused to others (steps three to seven), thereby acquiring new faculties of empathy. Finally, at steps eight and nine the candidate jumps into the crucible of the transformation of his will when he goes through the point zero of making himself completely vulnerable and powerless, in making amends to all those he has hurt. This is truly a turning point, a seeming place of void that opens new doors. Past and future meet in the willingness to make oneself truly powerless, but new, deeper power emerges that connects an individual with his higher self and what the future is calling him to become

In all the successive stages the individual goes from being supported by the organization to becoming an active supporter and shaper. At step ten what has been taken from the previous stages becomes an ongoing practice. This is what allows the point of openness to the future to become a source of continuous inspiration. The text mentions “continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.” The stage of openness to the future cannot be reached once. It has to be returned to over and over again. Step eleven means fully taking responsibility for our lives and being able

to carry others, part of which is the taking up of an active discipline of prayer and meditation. The recovering addict is now putting his shoulder to the wheel, not just for his personal recovery, but for the good of the group and eventually of Twelve Step itself. Finally there is in step twelve the complete dedication to and adoption in daily life of the goals of Twelve Step (“carrying the message to alcoholics and practicing the twelve steps in all affairs”), which means contributing to the continuance and regeneration of the group. Not surprisingly, from the accrued effects of all these steps practiced by thousands of individuals over many decades, not only is AA effective in its group work, but it is also very innovative, solid, and efficient in its organizational structure.

Twelve Step can be seen as a way to change a given double (a particular manifestation of the larger double) and an expression of the Lesser Karma Exercise.

Denial

Turn to the idea
of a higher power
(1 to 3)

Taking the
message to
others (step 12)

Making a moral
Inventory
(steps 4 to 7)

Taking responsibility
meditation and prayer
(step 11)

Making amends
(steps 8 to 9)

Continuing to take personal
inventory (step 10)

Experiencing powerlessness
and forgiveness

II) Destiny Learning

As we have examined in the text *Destiny Learning* is an approach consciously using the seven life processes in the idea of learning from life.

Observing a Destiny Event

Ordering my karma

Reading the event in my biography

Perceiving the Network

Connecting it to other events

of karma

Finding the Causes

Practicing in Daily Life

Seeing and Accepting
My unredeemed Destiny

Destiny Learning is conducted over 4 to 5 days and is a bit of a group activity equivalent of a Greater Karma Exercise (4 days/three nights exercise). See text for more information.

III) Nonviolent Communication (NVC): Case of a Mediation

An NVC mediation is a process in which participants are helped in forming a true connection at the level of feelings and will before having to take on any decision. It is not a place of compromise but a true shift to a higher level, marked by the active presence of the higher selves. A true NVC mediation can only occur after the participants experience a qualitative shift in themselves and in the relationship.

Habitual self

Jackal

Grounding: observations
Staying in the present

OPEN MIND

Implementing common ground
Working on agreement

Connecting: feeling
Empathy for the other

OPEN HEART

Reaching common ground
Agreeing on a set of requests

(Letting Go)
Connecting at
The Needs level

OPEN WILL

(Letting Come)
Seeking common ground
Experimenting with requests

Acknowledging all Needs
Connecting with
Higher self (selves)

At the beginning of the process the participants are “behaving in jackal,” which means repeating past perceptions and behaviors. The situation is stuck; there is only a conversation between doubles. Double is the closest translation of the playful term ‘jackal.’ Jackal is also a place of learning, once it is rendered conscious.

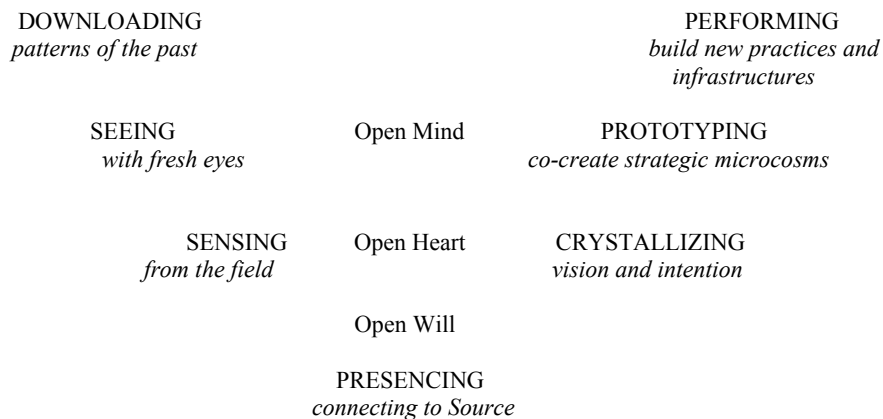
The mediator receives the conflictants and explains to them how he wants them to interact with each other through his help. Basically this means helping them reflect each other, and to ensure that the mediator often verbally reflects what the other party says, feels and wants, waiting for each party to repeat in their own words.

At a first level the mediator helps the participants refrain from bringing in past events. Only those events that concern the mediation moment are looked at. This is a stage of grounding on objective truth. The past is already layered with interpretation and cannot be counted to add objective common ground. At the level of feelings the two parties are invited to express each other's feelings and the mediator ensures that each is heard by the other. The same is repeated with each party's needs, deepening the connection in the realm of the will. This is the crucial step.

If all went well the participants reach a breakthrough which can be noticed because there is a slowing in the pace of mediation, the participants acting noticeably more relaxed, breathing deeply, waiting for the next step. Most likely this stage will be only reached through iterations, meaning a return to the previous stages, particularly as new feelings – corresponding to new needs – emerge. Once the shift has been reached in a permanent way then the mediator can work at finding common ground. Requests are put out in a sort of brainstorming session in which anything is possible. From these only the most concrete and doable emerge through which the participants agree that they can meet all their respective needs. Finally the results obtained must be implemented and stand the test of time. At this stage there can be a solution, further negotiations between the parties on new agreements or return – at a higher level – to mediation. We could say that mediation is a way to transform the double of the participants and of the relationship by bringing out the higher selves in both participants.

IV) Social Technology: Theory U

What NVC achieves for two individuals and eventually the groups they represent (e. g. mediation between two parties in conflict between two of their representatives), social technology does for organizations or communities. Examples of social technology are Appreciative Inquiry, World Café, Future Search, Dynamic Facilitation, etc. In Theory U (Otto Scharmer) the archetypal model upon which they operate is made manifest.



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of elements that contribute to form a situation of conflict. From these they can start to see patterns emerging and realize that they have unconsciously been part of them. This is what encourages connection between stakeholders at the level of feelings and will. When the process is completed the shift is perceived in that the participants acknowledge a common ground from which they can operate, allied with a new enthusiasm and desire for moving into concerted action. This stage in which the new can finally emerge is called 'presencing.' It is a place where the past is as if put on hold and the participants can collectively listen to the future wanting to emerge.

This moves us into the right side of the U. At the stage of crystallizing what emerges as an insight, a simple place of openness, almost a place of vacuum in the idea of presencing, needs to acquire focus and direction. Ideas need to be built upon and solidified, key players need to find each other and determine what forms their initiatives should take.

At the next stage Theory U introduces the idea of prototyping, which means nurturing and sustaining pilot initiatives for testing concrete ideas at a small scale, and offering these all the needed support in order to later integrate the practices at larger scales. When successful change is then brought at the level of the organization (performing).

Theory U and other similar applications don't address individual doubles, a process that would be time-consuming and sterile at a large and complex scale of operation. Rather, in a sense we could say that they call upon the Being of the organization in order to enable it to see its larger double and modify it by degrees.

APPENDIX: FOUR APPLICATIONS BASED ON THE SEVEN LIFE PROCESS

The 7 Life Processes

Breathing

Reproducing

Warming

Growing

Digesting

Maintaining

Secreting

To repeat, the seven life processes are: breathing, warming, nourishing, secreting, maintaining, growing and reproducing. There is a process of breathing, of warming, of nourishing, etc. of our seeing, of our hearing, of our sense of balance, and each of the twelve senses.

The first three processes reach us from the external world: breathing, warming and nourishing. The process of secreting concerns the internal secretion that facilitates assimilation and absorption and also excretion. The last three processes characterize the inner life of every organism. What is taken from the world by the organism sustains first maintenance, then growth and finally reproduction.

The following are four methodologies using the seven life processes.

D) 12 Step: AA, CoDa, Alanon, etc.

The following are the official Twelve Steps of AA:

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable

Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives to the care of God as we understood him.

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves

Step 5: Admitted to God, ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs

Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character

Step 7: Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings

Step 8: Made a list of all persons we harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Step 11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry the message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The whole life of an alcoholic or addict is an endless, repetitive act of denial of reality. (see tableau on p. 3) Initiating the Twelve Step process means being willing to acknowledge our powerlessness and open up to the idea of a higher power (steps one to three). This is just the first breach in the armor that surrounds the addict and that nullifies all his well-meaning efforts. It concerns the intellect. A second significant step comes from the individual involving himself with an open heart in making a moral inventory and letting himself be touched in his feelings through an understanding of the pain he has caused to others (steps three to seven), thereby acquiring new faculties of empathy. Finally, at steps eight and nine the candidate jumps into the crucible of the transformation of his will when he goes through the point zero of making himself completely vulnerable and powerless, in making amends to all those he has hurt. This is truly a turning point, a seeming place of void that opens new doors. Past and future meet in the willingness to make oneself truly powerless, but new, deeper power emerges that connects an individual with his higher self and what the future is calling him to become

In all the successive stages the individual goes from being supported by the organization to becoming an active supporter and shaper. At step ten what has been taken from the previous stages becomes an ongoing practice. This is what allows the point of openness to the future to become a source of continuous inspiration. The text mentions “continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.” The stage of openness to the future cannot be reached once. It has to be returned to over and over again. Step eleven means fully taking responsibility for our lives and being able

to carry others, part of which is the taking up of an active discipline of prayer and meditation. The recovering addict is now putting his shoulder to the wheel, not just for his personal recovery, but for the good of the group and eventually of Twelve Step itself. Finally there is in step twelve the complete dedication to and adoption in daily life of the goals of Twelve Step (“carrying the message to alcoholics and practicing the twelve steps in all affairs”), which means contributing to the continuance and regeneration of the group. Not surprisingly, from the accrued effects of all these steps practiced by thousands of individuals over many decades, not only is AA effective in its group work, but it is also very innovative, solid, and efficient in its organizational structure.

Twelve Step can be seen as a way to change a given double (a particular manifestation of the larger double) and an expression of the Lesser Karma Exercise.

Denial

Turn to the idea
of a higher power
(1 to 3)

Taking the
message to
others (step 12)

Making a moral
Inventory
(steps 4 to 7)

Taking responsibility
meditation and prayer
(step 11)

Making amends
(steps 8 to 9)

Continuing to take personal
inventory (step 10)

Experiencing powerlessness
and forgiveness

II) Destiny Learning

As we have examined in the text *Destiny Learning* is an approach consciously using the seven life processes in the idea of learning from life.

Observing a Destiny Event

Ordering my karma

Reading the event in my biography

Perceiving the Network

Connecting it to other events

of karma

Finding the Causes

Practicing in Daily Life

Seeing and Accepting
My unredeemed Destiny

Destiny Learning is conducted over 4 to 5 days and is a bit of a group activity equivalent of a Greater Karma Exercise (4 days/three nights exercise). See text for more information.

III) Nonviolent Communication (NVC): Case of a Mediation

An NVC mediation is a process in which participants are helped in forming a true connection at the level of feelings and will before having to take on any decision. It is not a place of compromise but a true shift to a higher level, marked by the active presence of the higher selves. A true NVC mediation can only occur after the participants experience a qualitative shift in themselves and in the relationship.

Habitual self

Jackal

Grounding: observations
Staying in the present

OPEN MIND

Implementing common ground
Working on agreement

Connecting: feeling
Empathy for the other

OPEN HEART

Reaching common ground
Agreeing on a set of requests

(Letting Go)
Connecting at
The Needs level

OPEN WILL

(Letting Come)
Seeking common ground
Experimenting with requests

Acknowledging all Needs
Connecting with
Higher self (selves)

At the beginning of the process the participants are “behaving in jackal,” which means repeating past perceptions and behaviors. The situation is stuck; there is only a conversation between doubles. Double is the closest translation of the playful term ‘jackal.’ Jackal is also a place of learning, once it is rendered conscious.

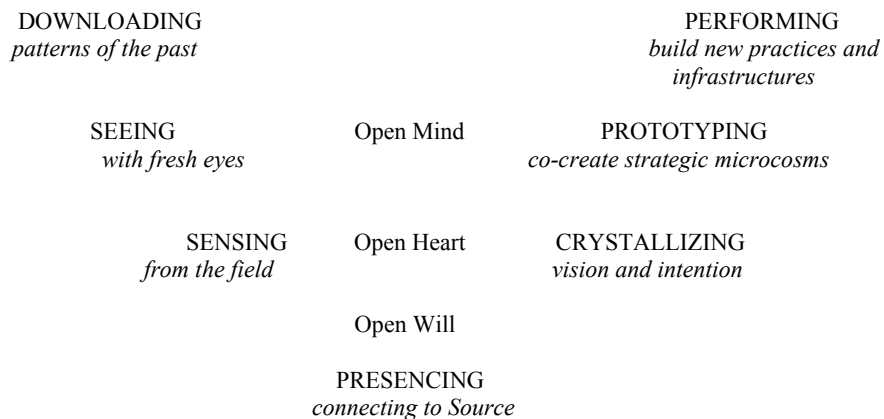
The mediator receives the conflictants and explains to them how he wants them to interact with each other through his help. Basically this means helping them reflect each other, and to ensure that the mediator often verbally reflects what the other party says, feels and wants, waiting for each party to repeat in their own words.

At a first level the mediator helps the participants refrain from bringing in past events. Only those events that concern the mediation moment are looked at. This is a stage of grounding on objective truth. The past is already layered with interpretation and cannot be counted to add objective common ground. At the level of feelings the two parties are invited to express each other's feelings and the mediator ensures that each is heard by the other. The same is repeated with each party's needs, deepening the connection in the realm of the will. This is the crucial step.

If all went well the participants reach a breakthrough which can be noticed because there is a slowing in the pace of mediation, the participants acting noticeably more relaxed, breathing deeply, waiting for the next step. Most likely this stage will be only reached through iterations, meaning a return to the previous stages, particularly as new feelings – corresponding to new needs – emerge. Once the shift has been reached in a permanent way then the mediator can work at finding common ground. Requests are put out in a sort of brainstorming session in which anything is possible. From these only the most concrete and doable emerge through which the participants agree that they can meet all their respective needs. Finally the results obtained must be implemented and stand the test of time. At this stage there can be a solution, further negotiations between the parties on new agreements or return – at a higher level – to mediation. We could say that mediation is a way to transform the double of the participants and of the relationship by bringing out the higher selves in both participants.

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