

PENTAGRAM

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THE SPIRITUAL PROMISE OF EASTERN EUROPE

‘The concept of Gnosis refers to knowledge. Generally speaking, this means hidden knowledge or mysterious knowledge. However, the Gnosis in its original sense, is the sum total of all primordial knowledge, the combination of all knowledge which directly refers to the original, divine life of a truly divine-human life wave.’

(From East to West, page 9)



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Pegasus, title page of *Gottfrid Arnolds Unparteyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie, Frankfurt am Mayn* (Gottfrid Arnold's Impartial History of the Church and Heretics, Frankfurt am Main), 1699.

‘MY MOMENT HAS NOT COME YET...’

Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin (1872-1915) was a phenomenon in Russian culture. His feelings and thoughts reached beyond those of the average Russian. He brought a world vision. His inspired and lived-through role has been clearly prophetic.

Scriabin developed his own ideas. He took over the theosophical concept of cosmic cycles, but believed that human beings did not have to wait that long before they could reach a high spiritual level. By means of his art he wanted to bring about the universal breakthrough, by breaking through and nullifying the dimension of time. His compositions were expressions of that philosophy. He wanted to heal humanity by his music. He thought that all the arts should join forces in a mighty synthesis that would help humanity to experience the mystery of the world. When that were to happen, the whole of humanity would change.

He was not very modest in propagating that message. However, his time counted many great personalities who – in the eyes of the sober modern human being – behaved in an exaggerated way. It was a period of great poets who gave colour and form to life by an abundance of brilliant images. Thus also the Russian composer, pianist, poet and philosopher Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin liked to stand in the limelight. During his life

he was famous, after his death he was soon forgotten. He considered it his task to pass on an exalted message to the whole of humanity through his music.

His upbringing has been determined by three women and some critics believe that this was the cause of his exalted behaviour. But Scriabin lived during the Russian Silver Age (end of the nineteenth, beginning of the twentieth century), when culture in Eastern Europe experienced a high and swift flight. It was a Golden Age, during which countless great ones played an important and particularly stimulating role, also with music, literature and poetry. It was an inspiring and fascinating time and the main characters in this colourful process were certainly spiritual giants. New ideas about the fu-



The Russian composer Scriabin.



The mountain in the Himalayas that inspired the painter Roerich. Photo Pentagram/St. Petersburg.

ture of humanity developed; another path had to be opened up. New dimensions had to be investigated and possibly be explored. It was also the time that Madame Blavatsky started her work. She called that time the end of Kali Yuga, the end of an era and the beginning of a new development for humanity and creation. Other, new and renewing forces and ideas broke

through. Traditions and old patterns of thinking and living were broken up.

Skriabin was inspired by the theosophical ideas he investigated in Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Key to Theosophy*. Although her ideas appealed to him, he did not feel attracted to her movement. He did not join it or any other esoteric society. However, he maintained

Prometheus and the eagle, lithography by Michelangelo.

contacts with occultists and esotericists as was usual in prominent circles at the time.

THE GLOSS OF STEEL

Restlessly he has been searching for new forms, new techniques, new sounds combined with a range of twelve colours instead of the usual seven or eight. Because he was clairvoyant, he could perceive the relationships between colours and sounds. In order to express them he used for example three shades of blue. By the 'gloss of steel' he symbolised the emerging technology and industrialisation. We do not know of all colours what was meant by them. In theosophical philosophy colours are associated with spiritual states of human beings: bright blue points to 'pure religious feelings', dark red refers to avarice, self-love and anger.

He wrote such references in the score of his fire poem *Prometheus* (1908-1910). He included two voices that were linked by light and colour. He indicated which

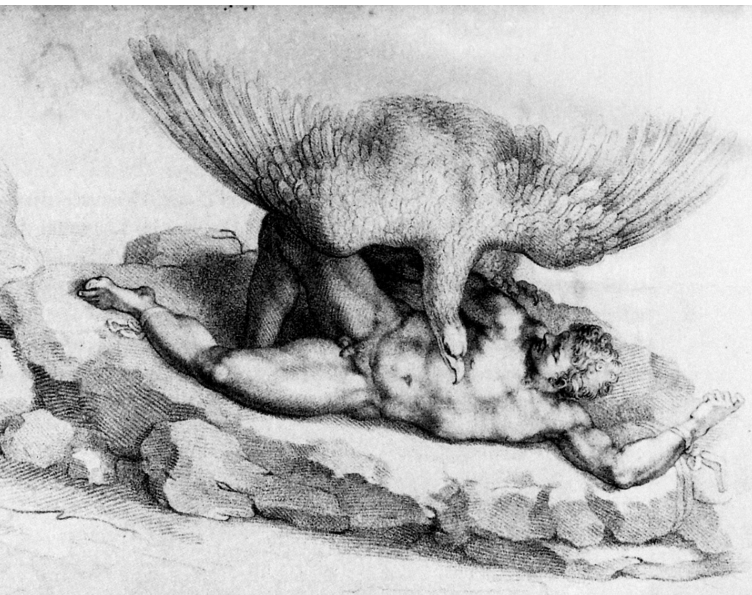
colours belonged to which notes and which moods they were supposed to represent: mysterious, glowing, reflective, or also the emergence of the human consciousness, the joy of life, grief, ecstatic delight. In this way he tried to indicate the transcendent nature of the ego. He called the basis 'the pleroma', a concept from gnosticism that means 'fullness, the divine world that is lifted above earthly reality'.

Alexander Scriabin tried to give his ideas concrete form in a philosophy, entirely his own. In it, he fiercely opposed Christianity as is demonstrated by his notes from 1894. He regularly attended meetings of the Religious-Philosophical Society in Moscow, where he also came into contact with Soloviev's ideas. Initially, the latter's mystical undertone did not appeal to him. He was rather focused on 'giving up the small I in order to win the great I (the universal consciousness that is free from space and time)': *'To the extent that I am aware of the world as my creation, everything must be the result of my free will. Nothing can exist outside me. I am an absolute being. Everything else are phenomena born of the rays of my consciousness.'*

TEMPLE OF ETHERIC MATTER

That process of inner development was expressed in his compositions. He experimented with many combinations of instruments, in the way Wagner did, who was fashionable at the time. But he went further than Wagner, whom he reproached of having too little form.

We are struck by the fact that he was occupied with a Mystery in his works. He also called it that, with a capital M.



That Mystery should take place in India. A temple of subtle etheric matter should be built there, a temple of music, colours and light. *'I have for a long time thought how the structure of the temple could be made flowing and creative. And suddenly I thought that you could make pillars of incense. They will be illuminated by the light of the light orchestra and they will spread and come together again! They will be enormous fiery pillars. And the whole temple will consist of them. The building will be flowing and variable, just as the music. And its forms will reflect the atmosphere of the music and the words.'*

Whoever entered this temple, would start as a candidate and have to pass through the various stages of initiation. The dimension of time would no longer exist after the manifestation of this Mystery. With this vision, Skriabin was far ahead of his time. According to him, the whole world would be put on the path of development that would lead her onto a higher plane.

All Skriabin's symphonic music was in fact meant as a preparation for this great Mystery. He had thought this up, felt it in this way and expressed it. But he was not the only one who was occupied with thoughts about music, light and colour. Already in the seventeenth century, the French Jesuit Castel had built a kind of harpsichord with which he could combine music and colour. In 1863 the German physicist Von Helmholtz was occupied with the combination of sound and colour. Hence, Skriabin's idea was in fact already quite old, but he was the one who was truly – and on a large scale – going to put it into practice. Quite different from Wagner, who expressed his mysteries in operas, Skriabin looked for the next

Skriabin: 'In true, real society, artists should be at the top of the hierarchy, artists and people who possess wisdom, because they have the most sublime and greatest ideas and possess the highest clarity. Mountains or masses – everything is matter, but we should move toward dematerialization.'

Modern musicians also experiment with light. During concerts of pop, rock and house stars, a masterly 'music temple' is suggested by means of smoke and coloured light. But that is not what Skriabin had in mind.

stage. He felt the impulses of the new era and was aware that not very much time would be available to achieve positive results. Hence something had to happen and without any restraint he drew the attention of the upper classes to his vision and experiments. He was convinced that there is one all-encompassing principle, from which everything originates, the unity of creation. All incidents occurring in it are only appearances. The great that is standing outside must be the unity.

It was not granted to him to fully carry out his ideas. Rather young he died of an initially innocent infection. Countless authors, poets, composers and painters of his time – and later – have been inspired by him.

OF TRUE MAN OR THE RESURRECTION

*Dialogue between staretz (old wise man) Pamva, Anton, Quadrate, the friend and others.
From 'Narcissus' by Grigory Skovoroda.*

Friend: Listen, Pamva! You have been studying all the time now! Have you finally learned a Psalm of David?

Pamva: Yes, but I know only one.

Friend: Just one?

Pamva: Yes, only one.

Friend: Which one?

Pamva: It begins like this: *'I said, I will guard my ways, that I may not sin with my tongue.'* (Psalm 39 – eds.) I do not need more. In the meantime, I have found a bridle for my mouth and have sealed my old tongue.

Friend: Speaking is but a river of words and the tongue is its source. But, dear Pamva, if the Lord has delivered you from your unworthy tongue, he will certainly give you the tongue of David, who has studied God's Truth all day long and proclaims His power to the generations that are coming.

Quadrate: That is true. For who can speak about white without knowing black? Our tongue tastes bitter and sweet alike. If the Lord reveals in someone a deceitful tongue, He can also give the right word to him who studies wisdom.

Anton: What? You just said something very wonderful. Whoever does not know the new tongue, cannot know the old one either!

Pamva: Undoubtedly. The old shows itself the moment the new is fathomed. Have you ever watched someone fathoming the darkness without ever having seen the light? Tell me: can a mole explain the difference between night and day to you?

Anton: A mole cannot, but man can.

Pamva: Can a blind man tell you what is

white in a painting?

Anton: No, he can't.

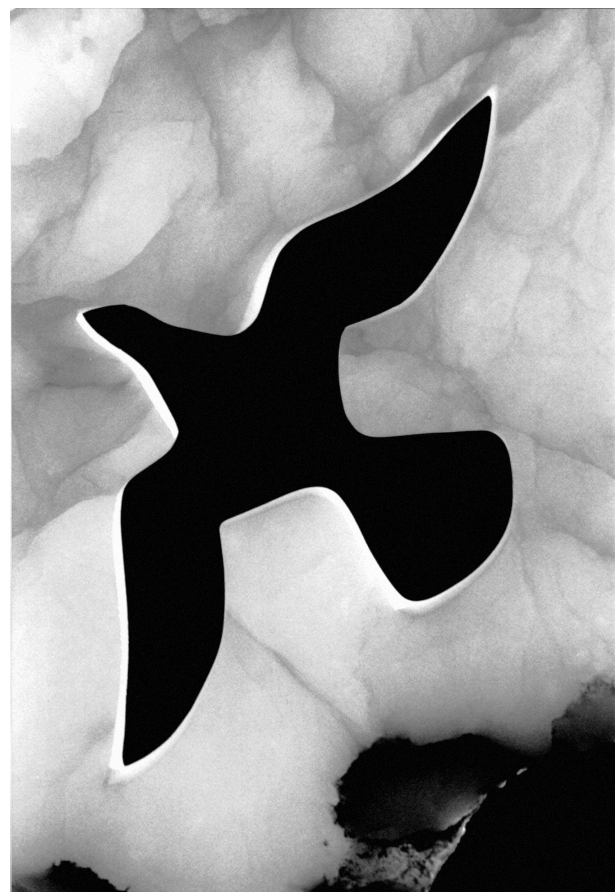
Pamva: Why not?

Anton: Because he has never seen and known black. If he could distinguish one of the two contrasting colours, he would at the same time know the other one.

Pamva: This is also true in the following case. Whoever understands youth will also fathom old age.

Anton: I cannot but wonder that a human being can at birth understand neither youth nor old age, unless he is born again.

Pamva: The Light explains everything



Marble pigeon.
Photo Pentagram.

that is unclear due to darkness, just as God alone can bestow the whole truth upon us. The earthly human being thinks he understands. But doesn't an infant perceive many things at the dawn of his life, while they do actually not exist at all? The ascending Light destroys all delusion. Yet, does not everybody know the words time, life, death, love, thought, soul, passion, conscience, mercy and eternity? We believe we understand their meaning. But when someone is asked to clarify them, he will be lost in absurd explanations. Who can explain what 'time' means without having fathomed eternity? Time, life and all those other things are in God. Who can understand anything of all visible and invisible creatures as long as he has not recognised that which is both the most important and the basis? [...]

If you want to know and fathom anything, you must first climb the mountain of Divine Knowledge. There you will be enlightened by the hidden rays of God and fathom everything you want, not only early youth and the old decaying garment, but also the most ancient and the heaven of heavens. But who shall lift us up from the abyss of ignorance? Who will take us along on God's mountain? Where are you, our Light, Jesus Christ? Only You speak the truth in Your heart. Your word is truth. Your gospel is a lit lamp and you yourself are the Light of the lamp. That is the only way to escape delusion and darkness which originated from ignorance. That is the house of David, in which the Throne of Justice judges and destroys all lies. What would

Grigory Skovoroda (see Pentagram 2004, no. 2, p. 24) called his dialogue Narcissus (around 1870) his 'firstborn son'. He filled the fifty pages of this book with numerous aspects of the spiritual path. In the prologue, Skovoroda interprets the myth of Narcissus in an unusual way and describes transfigurism as a process of 'melting, transforming and uniting with the Divine source'. One of the participants of the seventh dialogue, translated in this article, is starets Pamva. Until the twentieth century, a starets ('ancient one') was a renowned and beloved counselor. Dostojevski describes such a starets in his novel The Brothers Karamazov: 'Fathers and teachers, what is a monk? In the cultivated world the word is nowadays pronounced with a jeer by some people, and by others it is used as a term of abuse, and this contempt for the monk is growing. It is true, alas, it is true, that there are many sluggards, gluttons, profligates, and insolent beggars among monks. Educated people point to these: "You are idlers, useless members of society, you live on the labour of others, you are shameless beggars." And yet how many meek and humble monks there are, yearning for solitude and fervent prayer in peace! These are less noticed, or passed over in silence. And how surprised men would be if I were to say that from these meek monks, who yearn for solitary prayer, the salvation of Russia will perhaps come once more! For they are in truth made ready in peace and quiet "for the day and the hour, the month and the year." Meanwhile, in their solitude, they keep the image of Christ fair and undefiled, in the purity of God's truth, from the times of the Fathers of old, the Apostles and the martyrs.'

you like to know, Anton? Then look for it in that beloved house. If you don't find the entrance to one room, knock on another door, keep on knocking on the tenth, the hundredth, the thousandth, the



ten-thousandth one [...] From the outside, this house of God looks like a stable, but inside the Virgin gives birth to the one of whom the angels are singing unceasingly. [...] But do not enter like a thief. Look for the doors and knock until you are admitted. You will not be found worthy to enter as long as you prefer this world to the Mountain of God. Nobody will be admitted who is half-hearted. Should you use force to enter, you will be thrown back into even deeper darkness. [...]

Friend: I can no longer be silent now that I have heard the most sacred and sweetest word of the serene resurrection. Although I am sitting in that cold and deathly darkness, I perceive an inner mysterious ray that warms my heart. Oh, Pamva, let us protect this divine spark in our hearts, so that the dust and ashes of our graves do not extinguish it. [...] Oh, divine spark! Seed and germ! Seed of Abraham! Son of David! Christ Jesus! Heavenly and new man! Head and heart and Light of all creation! Centre of the universe! Power, law and kingdom of peace! Right hand of God! Our resurrection! When will I be al-

lowed to experience you? You are the true man and the pure flesh. However, we do not know that man, but only the human being who is mortal like all the others. That true man will never die. [...] And whoever knows the imperishable true man, will not die. Death has no power over him. He rules forever as a faithful servant with his Lord and he lays down his earthly flesh like a worn garment and puts on the new flesh made for him. He shall not pass away but be changed and receive imperishable hands instead of animal ears, eyes and tongues and receive all other limbs, the true limbs that are hidden in God.

Waving reed demonstrates its resilience. Lake Balaton, Hungary. Photo Pentagram.

FROM EAST TO WEST

Seen from the earth, the sun travels from east to west. We say that it rises in the east and sets in the west, in seemingly endless repetition. The visible sun makes life on earth possible. Yet there is also an invisible sun, which controls and nourishes invisible processes.

The visible sun is an expression of the invisible spiritual sun, called Aten by the Egyptians, Hephaestus by the Greeks and Vulcan by the Romans. However, the visible sun is more than a material counterpart of the invisible sun. It transmits the forces released by the invisible, spiritual sun for the benefit of the solar system. As such it is a call resounding from the east.

East and west are geographical indications related to the rotation of the earth. Should the position of the poles change, then east and west would also change place, as described in ancient Egyptian temple archives. In Old Indian, Greek and Latin the concepts of respectively *usas*, *eos* and *aurora* were used. They mean 'dawn' as well as 'goddess of the dawn' and 'golden shine'. The word 'west' is derived from the Old Indian *avas*, the Greek *hespera* and the Latin *vesper*. They mean as much as descending (also into matter), declining, evening (star) and evening land. And also, the place where the sun disappears and darkness begins.

As the universal teachings explain, the planned development of humanity has now entered the Aryan era. This era is named after the Old Indian word *arya*, meaning noble. The cradle of the Aryan races lies in Central Asia. From there the seven spiritual impulses of the seven world religions have emanated. These seven world religions and the cultures arising from them, have left astral, etheric and physical traces from east to west. In this way the darkness gradually was and is illuminated.

Many of these traces are invisible. The visible traces can be found in temples, words, symbols and images testifying of the origin of humanity and its return to that origin. In the Gospel of John (1:1-3) we can read: '*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.*' It seems that the power of this magical Bible word has got lost. At any rate, it no longer appeals to the materially-minded human being. For him it has largely deteriorated into a perfectly ordinary word that can be used at any occasion to substantiate one's own opinion. Thus it appears to have lost its power. Or so it seems. But reality is different. Because without the Word of which the Gospel of John testifies, *not anything was made that was made.* That Word is the power behind growth and fulfilment, the

The god Dionysus is born from the thigh of Zeus and is caught by Hermes. Bas-relief, Vatican Museum, Rome.

power perfecting creation, irresistibly and systematically. Coincidence and arbitrariness are excluded in this process.

LIVING KNOWLEDGE OF ORIGINAL LIFE

The *Book of the Golden Precepts*, the source of which is unknown and from which H P Blavatsky derived *The Voice of the Silence*, mentions the Gnyana of Gnyan, meaning pure knowledge or wisdom. 'Woe to the deer that is o'ertaken by the barking fiends before he reach the Vale of Refuge, Gnyan Marga, "path of pure knowledge" named'. Here, Gnyan is literally translated as 'path of pure knowledge'. And a Sanskrit textbook about the living knowledge Gnyaneshwari describes the moment at which Krishna imparts his brilliant philosophical treatise to Arjuna.

The Greeks called the living knowledge of original life Gnosis. When the Christian concept of 'God' started to lose its meaning, the Greek word 'Gnosis' was again 'un-covered' and gained significance. After the Renaissance the time was ripe to study the backgrounds of

Gnostic life in depth and to put them into practice. After long periods of 'suppression' and a relatively short period of preparation by pioneers like Madame Blavatsky, Max Heindel, Rudolf Steiner and many others, the veils were lifted from the Gnosis. This new development was also envisaged in the next phase of the development plan for humanity.

From crevices and deserts of obscurity the unadulterated teachings emerged. Discoveries like those at Nag Hammadi in Egypt brought the Gnosis into the news. In spite of initial opposition from conservative quarters, the manuscripts of Nag Hammadi could be translated and made available to the public at large. The profound wisdom of the ancient Gnostics was placed before the modern human being and gradually gained recognition.

In the meantime many have embraced the Gnosis as a source of unknown inspiration, as a voice from another world, and Gnosis has become an object of profound study especially in esoteric circles. But 'Herod', always present as a major adversary, is keeping a finger on the pulse. He enjoys placing the Gnosis in a bad



light, while recognising its traces as an historical phenomenon of minor importance. This of course does not keep the Gnosis from guiding humanity with immeasurable love and patience in its development and to steer its ascent in the right direction. The child must grow, become strong and do away with its swaddling-clothes of time and delusion.

It is very important for the modern human being to continuously 'inhale', with head and heart, that living, purifying and regenerating power of God, the Gnosis, so that it can fulfil him and raise him above his wrong track. For that is the condition for growth. Only with heart and head enlightened in this way, a human being can be a servant of the Gnosis. The Gnostic path of development has a wealth of witnesses. Complete civilisations have followed this path and in the more recent past that thread has been picked up again by the Bogomils, Cathars, Freemasons and Rosicrucians.

SEARCHING ON ALL LEVELS OF LIFE

In our present turbulent times, many become conscious of unknown, often higher inner motives. They form groups of seekers on all kinds of levels. As in the past, some unite in brotherhoods with high ideals. On the basis of the potential faculties of their new soul they can build a unity in which they can cross the border between form and content and become of service to their fellow human beings. Then the light power received and released by them can be used to alleviate the needs of their fellow creatures.

Should they succeed in forming a Grail, or as the Bible calls it, a sea of glass, this would show that they had con-



quered lower life. Then such a community of newly ensouled human beings reaches the level on which the Gnosis can reveal itself to them for the benefit of humanity, which is searching for liberation.

GNOSIS IS OMNIPRESENT AND PENETRATES EVERY HUMAN BEING

The time seems to be ripe for this. In daily life ripeness indicates the moment of the harvest. This is also the case in a spiritual sense. The Gnosis speaks for itself. That power is omnipresent and encompasses and penetrates every human being. Everyone searching for this power must be able to recognise it in those who propagate it. Yet, it can only be made recognisable by those who receive it consciously and who

The sun god Shamash warms a Babylonian monarch. Relief in Susa, Mesopotamia, 12th-19th century BC. Louvre, Paris.



Hephaestus
forges a shield.
Museo nuovo del
Palazzo
Conservatori,
Rome

consciously release it and pass it on for the benefit of all of life. That is what needs to be done, if humanity is to profit from it.

After the periods of working *for* humanity and *with* humanity, the time has now come that the Gnosis can work *through* humanity, provided that the latter is willing. Gnosticism may still be a heretical movement, especially to the conservative and authoritarian human being, to others it brings a refreshing outlook on creation and one's own life with many new possibilities, and particularly with a new, liberating purpose of life.

It becomes apparent that Gnosis is not bound to time. Rather, it is beyond time and space. It is the living truth from the beginning of creation. The Word of the beginning *without which not anything was made that was made*.

Humanity has reached the end of a development. That means that a new phase is standing at the door and in fact has already started. The dawn of this new development has already announced itself. And it is up to present-day human beings to testify in deed and truth of the Word, the Gnosis. In the Bible we can read that Jesus Christ has come into the flesh. That means that the living knowledge and the

truth descend into the human being to manifest themselves in and through him.

The Gnostic transfigurist Jan van Rijckenborgh writes in his book *The Universal Gnosis*, that the concept of Gnosis refers to knowledge. Generally speaking this means hidden knowledge or mysterious knowledge. However, the Gnosis in its original sense, is the sum total of all primordial knowledge, the combination of all knowledge which directly refers to the original, divine life of a truly divine-human life wave. This Gnosis was never written down. That was not possible. It was only passed on orally. And only that was passed on, which at any moment was deemed useful and necessary. It is impossible for the Gnosis to be revealed and presented in its entirety, as a system.

THE GRAIL IS A BEACON IN THE NIGHT OF THE TIMES

All universal books of wisdom of the ancients – also the collection we know as the Bible – do not necessarily constitute revealed Gnosis, although these special writings indeed testify *of* the Gnosis. They tell of the original inviolable unity, of the incident of the separation between

the divine and the undivine. Usually this takes the form of a dialogue between a teacher and his pupil in search of that original unity. Hence there are many legends and tales in which that origin and the road leading to it, are portrayed. In some of them the Grail has been chosen as the ultimate symbol of these processes. The Grail goes from east to west, from light to darkness and is, as such, a beacon in the night of the times.

This Christian culture was the period of the harvest, the testimony of those who had found the way of the Grail and who put its requirements into practice. That path has amongst other things been recorded in the books of the four evangelists. But they were not the only ones who testified of this path. Some apocryphal books shed new light on obscure passages in the four gospels. The Gnosis was 'un-covered' and unveiled anew.

It is generally known that most messengers of the Gnosis did not write anything down themselves. Others passed their words on and often texts have been compiled from these traditions.

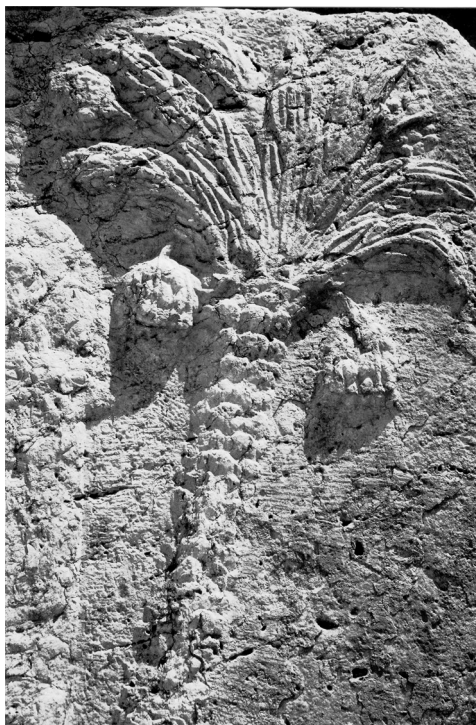
THE HUMAN BEING IS CALLED WITH EVERY HEARTBEAT

At times the way is outlined so crystal-clear that we may wonder why comparatively few people see and find the Gnostic path of liberation. Is there so little understanding? Are people that lazy? Do they not feel a need for it? Have their daily worries and pleasures priority? Have they no idea of the situation they are in? Many of them – consciously or unconsciously – are touched in the heart by the Gnosis time and again, like a heartbeat.

They can close themselves off, but they can also open their hearts. Then they will become increasingly conscious of the true purpose of their lives. And they will perceive something of the dawn breaking in the east and of the exodus out of present-day darkness. The time has come and they feel the pressure driving them towards and into that new development.

It requires a living soul to understand the Gnosis. Philosophical reflections about the Gnosis of bygone days and its traces in history are of minor importance in this respect. What counts is acting, that is, reacting positively to the call of the Gnosis. That will increase knowledge, because Gnosis is living knowledge nourished by the original fire. Whoever becomes conscious of that process, will start living on the basis of this reality. He will also take care that concepts like Gno-

Rock-relief of a palm tree.
Palmyra, Syria.
Photo Pentagram



sis and Gnostic do not deteriorate towards the everyday level of incomprehension. He regards them too highly for this. After all, when there is no pure understanding, superficiality can become a great danger and everything becomes talked to pieces and fragmented only too easily, resulting in even more incomprehension and confusion.

Jan van Rijckenborgh calls Gnostic philosophising an illusion. To him Gnosis is not a philosophy, not a religion, not a method. Neither does it appeal to our intellectual or emotional faculty. Initially, it only approaches the seeking human being in a certain garment. In reality it is the power of the True Kingdom, wanting to be linked with the microcosm in a simple way. In *The Gnostic Mysteries of Pistis Sophia* he writes: *'And when you [...] keep your eye fixed towards the dawn and confirm it with all your actions in life, it will begin to become light in the east. The vibration of the microcosm will increase and the eastern as well as the western magnetic streams will have to attune to it. The outgoing one sweeps the unholy forces outside*

and the incoming one evokes the ancient past of God's children.'

In his book *The Angel of the Western Window*, the author Gustav Meyrink describes how the expelled forces still try to work on the human being as magnetic influences and for a long time continue to come knocking on the door of the I to be allowed back in again. Hence, neutrality of the I is the only basis and the only starting point. The Gnosis itself is doing the work in the inner chamber, when the human being gives outer form to the work in Its force. In our time all people are called to this noble work. The work on the outside of things is consciously cooperating in the harvest and preparing all those, who have not yet found the way. The work in the inner chamber is receiving the descending Gnosis in the prepared, yearning heart.

Uninterruptedly the sun moves from east to west in everybody's daily and spiritual life. That is why it is said: *'Work as long as it is day and bide your time.'* In that way the human being can testify of the inviolability of God's glory.

The earth, like all other bodies in the solar system, is nourished, maintained and cleansed by solar energy. That stream of energy, the so-called solar wind, is emanated by the sun about once every eleven years with flames reaching a length of as much as one million kilometres. In October and November 2003, this 'blood circulation' of the sun displayed a kind of 'disturbance of the heart rhythm'. Although it was not yet time for a new heartbeat, on 28 October an eruption took place on a scale of 7, followed on 29 October by an eruption of 10 and on 4 November by a solar storm of 28. Thus, in a period of ten days a total of three very powerful eruptions, more powerful than usual, occurred. The last solar storm could be seen on film like the mighty flame of a flame-thrower. The registration equipment of the satellites could not cope with this violence and temporarily ceased to operate.

DECEIVED BY THE STRAIGHTJACKET OF THE MIND

'The highest knowledge is to know nothing.' All over the world there are people who have come to this conclusion. Others regard this ancient Rosicrucian statement as an incomprehensible paradox. What then is truth?

Classifying things into categories and imposing limitations by means of the mind can be helpful to organise our daily life. Yet, as soon as such methods are going to dominate our thinking, they obstruct our further development and deceive us inwardly. The Russian philosopher Leo Shestov (1866-1938) was one of those formidable thinkers, who was first of all occupied with the development of a 'philosophy of religion', because the intellect imposed too many restrictions on him. He was good friends with the Russian philosopher Berdjajev and visited his weekly salons in Paris regularly. Lev Shestov, his civilian name was Leo Isaak Schwarzmann, was born in Kiev. He studied in Moscow, Rome and Bern and escaped from the Bolsheviks to Geneva, from where he was invited to the Sorbonne. He spent the last years of his life in Paris. In 1938 he died, leaving behind an imposing body of philosophical works.

During his search for truth, Shestov gained numerous important insights and always formulated them in a new way. Frequently he described how the human being – forced by his mentality – deviated

from the way lying before him. He asked himself over and over again in the course of his examinations, what had formed his life and why he was led from the outside to the inside, to the 'mysterious immeasurable depth'. In particular he concentrated his research on the motivation of the intellectual human being. For all his life he was fighting the dominance of the biological brain. This is one of the reasons why he is regarded as one of the most important thinkers of the twentieth century. Shestov spoke about the 'unrestricted nature of the objective mind', which puts itself on a pedestal and thus threatens to dam any higher human faculty. This tendency to suppress pure inner life and to put the one-sided mind on the foreground was, however, not new.

'PHILOSOPHER OF THE ABYSS'

In order to distinguish himself from the numerous movements of his time occupied with this, he called himself the 'philosopher of the abyss'. He confronted the unlimited expansion power of the intellect with his 'apotheosis of the unfathomable depth'. Thus he wanted to show the existence of mysterious and secret depths which are inaccessible to the intellect. But this very 'abyss' gives an opportunity for the manifestation of spiritual aspects. In this context he spoke from experience, for whatever he experienced himself as mysterious and unfathomable, ultimately

offered him the key to a more profound understanding of existence. He felt and assumed an immense creative *'freedom beyond the limits of the mind'*. That is why he used all his energy and attention to detach from the *'bogged-down intellectual starting points'*.

Shestov recognised very keenly that making excessive use of our reason also entails a threat to religious life. In his publication *Schlüsselgewalt* (Power of the Keys) he indicated how boldly and high-handedly the experimenting mind behaves, as it even wants to prove God. What hasn't reason been up to in the course of history! The errant reason constructed its own criteria to prove the existence of the Divine. As if God would bow down to such criteria! God was graciously proven by the conceited mind.

A WAY OUT WHERE THERE IS NO LONGER A WAY OUT

Where did the way lead that Shestov took? He stated: *'The one and only way out begins where, according to human standards, there is no longer a way out. You must turn to the unfathomable in order to be able to approach the impossible. [...] There is God, just because the unfathomable does not fit into any category of the mind.'* In another publication he stated: *'You must submerge in God and by a leap liberate yourself from everything rational.'* In that way he placed himself in the company of the early Christian writer Tertullian who noted: *'Credo quia absurdum! I believe, just because it breaks up the limits of the mind.'* In his book *Athens and Jerusalem* (1938), Shestov described his philosophy of life: *'Jerusalem must go to Athens to receive the blessing.'* And in *The Balance of Job. About the wellspring of eternal Truth* (1929), he used the same

image: *'Everything that comes from Jerusalem must be weighed in the balance of Athens, it is said.'* What was meant by that? Shestov called Athens the capital of pure reason and Jerusalem the capital of religious feeling. He saw no compromise between the intellectuality of Athens and the expectant desire of Jerusalem. Both excluded each other. *'Knowledge can never be the highest goal of the human being!'* That is why Shestov particularly condemned *'the drive for knowledge in philosophy'*, because, according to him, due to all that 'knowledge', 'the true gift of God' would be darkened. By this 'true gift' he meant the absolute, creative freedom which is brought about by the self-perceiving faith. In that way the human being could shake off the straightjacket of the mind. *'God is only present where no laws are dominating, but where freedom can live and breathe.'* He was convinced that the first warning against the working of the mind had already been described in the myth of the fall. According to Shestov, there was only an intellectual fall, which had to end with the expulsion of the human beings from the 'mysterious unfathomable'. That 'fall' originated from the *'craving for knowledge and eating from the poisoned fruits.'*

'CLOSING OFF THE PATH TO THE TRUTH'

Shestov characterised modern science as a cancer tumour. *'Science is spreading by the hour and thus is making the mists around the original mystery grow ever denser.'* As a true inhabitant of the border he experienced the unnatural dividing wall between himself and the unfathomable very intensely. Referring to this imprisonment he said: *'It is as if a power has decided to close off the way to truth already before the creation of the world.'*

Ever since the errant mind has been going dark ways. *'Either the whole construction of our world is wrong or all of us are going the wrong way to truth!'*

Shestov did not condemn thinking in general, but he turned against the addiction to thinking that causes all kinds of deviations, because the sharpened mind does not even understand itself. In vain he has sought for harmony between heart and head. He regarded the consciousness as veiled. *'People are living surrounded by an infinite number of secrets. [...] It is a mystery to what extent they have been cut off from their primordial origin and from the wellspring of life.'* Shestov was convinced that immense forces are slumbering in human souls, and that these forces could make them experience the *'unfathomable depth'* directly. In his publication *The Idea of Good* (1898), he pointed out how this can take place: *'Fraternal love is not yet God. You must rather seek after that which is higher than ordinary sympathy and compassion, higher than good. You must seek God!'* His search begins where *'the road leads beyond reason and morals.'* Since the publication of that work, Shestov has been regarded as one of the most important representatives of 'Russian religious renaissance'.

Which were the summits of his spiritual quest? Shestov experienced that the contrast between faith and science cannot be bridged. He was also able to experience how he received inner revelations through his faith. To him, inner revelation was absolutely different from knowledge. Shestov related that *'revelation can only take place on the mountain'*. He saw Moses on Mount Sinai and Jesus on the Mount of Olives and confronted his fellow human beings with these images in order to make them reflect profoundly on them. In his opinion all the strained intellectual



efforts of people took place in the lowest regions of life. That is why he called the materialised manifestations of truth merely *'embodiments of errors'*. He experienced his philosophy as *'the highest music in the sense of Plato'*.

'THE HUMAN BEING MUST STAND ON HIS INNER SCALES'

The philosopher Shestov did not live in seclusion. He exchanged ideas with well-known thinkers like Martin Buber, Albert Einstein, Marinan Zvetajeva, Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl. Boris Pasternak was influenced by his views. His old friend Sergey Bulgakov, a Russian philosopher of religion, describes him as follows: *'It was impossible not to like Shestov, even if you did not share his views. This is explained by his amazing tactfulness, his impressive goodness and benevolence. These attributes formed the general tone of his relationships with people –*

Earthenware head showing the place of the brain functions.

without any jealousy whatsoever. All of this went together with his hard struggle for spiritual achievements.'

According to him, what mattered was that the human being is going to stand on his inner scales. The potential of the soul must be manifested. That is why he chose the figure of Job from the *Old Testament* as an example. Job remained faithful to his inner consciousness. He trusted God uninterruptedly, although his suffering and distress increased daily. After it had finally become '*heavier than the sand of the sea*', he shouted in his despair and helplessness: '*Let me be weighed in a just balance, and let God know my integrity.*' Shestov was deeply impressed by Job's suffering, but above all by his steadfastness. Without grumbling he accepted and endured his fate, while he might as well have used his mind and fight God. Shestov was fascinated by this acceptance of fate. He regarded it as a distinctive mark of the genuine good that is present in a human being. Whenever that speaks, the tempters surround him, first of all his wife and his best friends who advised him 'for good reasons', in their opinion, to reject his God. Where then is divine justice, if someone is suffering like that? Yet, Job disregards such 'reasonable' advice, he is deaf to it.

'APOTHEOSIS OF THE UNFATHOMABLE'

With the theme of his *Balance of Job*, Shestov wanted to show that in a more profound sense the intellect is not important, '*because God looks on the heart.*' God hears the desperate cries from the depth, but He rejects the rational proposals of Job's friends. Only in this way the law of laws can be unveiled and recognised. That is the '*apotheosis of the unfathomable*', a higher reality, remaining concealed to the mind as we know it. Thus God is a power surpassing human reason. The

mind as far as it has developed in us, is a temporary one. Whoever holds on to it, clings to darkness.

Shestov showed that everyone '*should detach from this intellectual tutelage*' in order to be able to experience true life. Only after having left affairs of the world as defined by reason behind, he will find the way back to the spiritual fatherland. Like Job he will no longer nourish worldly expectations, but live consciously as a stranger in his everyday world. He experiences this 'being a stranger' as mercy, because he has been allowed to detach from the straightjacket of the mind. In her translation of *The Voice of the Silence*, H P Blavatsky called the mind the 'great slayer' that has to be eliminated and, Shestov wrote, be replaced by a new thinking. The philosophy of the Golden Rosycross describes in detail how that new thinking, which cannot be limited by any human restriction, can develop.

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Idem, *Tolstoi und Nietzsche, die Idee des Guten in ihren Lehren* (Tolstoy and Nietzsche, the concept of Good in their teachings), Matthes & Seitz, Munich, 1994.

Idem, *Auf Hiobs Waage, Wanderungen durch das Seelenreich* (On Job's balance, Wanderings through the realm of the Soul), Verlag Herder, Vienna, 1950.

Sergey Bulgakov, quoted after Gustav A.

Conradi from: *Leo Schestow oder das paradisiacale Leben in der Schrift 'Die Idee des Guten'* (Leo Shestov or Paradisiacal life in the work 'The Idea of Good'), see 3.

Old Testament: 1 Sam.16:7; Job 6:3, 31:6.

COURAGE, OVER-CONFIDENCE AND HUMILITY

Everyone has his own associations with the word courage. Everyone will also have his own way when it comes to showing courage. It involves physical courage, social courage, moral courage, keeping courage. In this article we would like to examine if there is also such a thing as spiritual courage, and where it stands in relation to the kinds of courage we know.

A simple description of courage is: daring to do something difficult. As a small child it takes courage to shake hands with a stranger, to ride a bicycle without support, to jump into a pool during swimming lessons, to ask another child for the return of a toy that belongs to you, etc. The older people around you are there to 'encourage' you. In this way you develop the courage and stamina to take up your station in life. You look up to someone who 'dares to do anything', he is your hero. In fairytales as a child you find inspiration in the courage of the principal character. In the school paper there's a feature: Name a hero, or: Hero of the week. That also serves as an example. In the Netherlands the *Project The Hero* is run in primary schools, aimed at helping fight bullying, racism and random violence. Soccer and other 'heroes' are used to communicate the right standards and values. History lessons subsequently tell about major heroes from the past, who

physically distinguished themselves by their brave actions. In this way understanding is created for moral and physical courage. And then the challenge grows: to attack in a school debate an opinion you consider 'wrong', or to put your life on the line reacting to violence in school or in the street. To jump into a hundred metre deep shaft with a bungee cord tied around your legs, or to backpack through Australia alone.

Young persons want to explore their limits, to overcome their instincts of withdrawal, in short, to meet the challenge to overcome existential fear by force of will or to show what he or she stands for. That creates self-confidence and a feeling of power. Thus a mode of life develops in which situations are faced with courage and the beaten path is left. Sometimes this outward courage is fuelled by moral outrage and a desire develops to courageously fight injustice, for example through activism, with perhaps as its ultimate manifestation the joining of a guerrilla group that tries to stand up for the oppressed of this earth by means of violence. Then courage becomes true disregard for death. The power this produces can turn courage into haughtiness, arrogance, cruelty and other abuse of power.

Whoever has the courage to honestly look at this process can reach one conclusion only: this type of – outward – courage does not solve the injustice in this world. Lao Tzu says: *'The finest weapons are instruments of disaster. Those who pos-*

ness Tao will have nothing to do with them.’¹ But for the idealist who got bogged down, the apparent alternative – to cowardly let everything happen – has long since ceased to be an option. He has to do something. Hasn’t man been called to be his brother’s keeper? Jan van Rijckenborgh says in his comments on the text by Lao Tzu: *‘The only means to truly help humanity can be found in the application, the most radical application, of the universal power of love. That is not the love nature of the I-human being. This Divine love, the love that surpasses everything, can be released by those who possess a liberated soul.’*

What is being said here? Firstly that humanity can be helped in the absolute sense of the word, and secondly that this requires a liberated soul. Liberation of the soul could be described as: *‘in the world, but not of the world.’* Is that possible? Suppose a human being wants to choose this, wants to attain this state of being. That is certainly something that requires courage, but it is a different kind of courage. It primarily involves the courage to see the way in which the personality is bound to self-maintenance, to being ‘of the world’, by many threads. Hence it involves a merciless self-knowledge, and subsequently the radical demolition of the I-being and letting go of all selfishness. Existential fear, the fear of letting go, then becomes a looming presence. In the Bible we can read of him who overcomes this fear: *‘He who overcomes himself, is stronger than he who takes a city.’* Buddhism says: *The wise human being has no fear.*

That process means a hard inner struggle that requires incredible courage. For to gain insight into one’s own being brings much disillusionment. One can get so ‘dis-couraged’ that doubt strikes: ‘I will never be able to do that, I will never be such a liberated soul that can apply this universal love power.’ Pythagoras says in

his *Golden Verses* about this inner struggle: *‘If you have no courage, yet do take courage.’* If the courage, developed on the basis of the willpower of the I, can no longer be active because the I is being neutralised, courage can be taken from the new state of mind of the heart that is based on the soul. The point is no longer the courage of the I, but humility and meekness, that is the self-surrender of the I to the universal love power. Then the new soul grows. Then we will be able to release a constant stream of love on the basis of a truly pure mode of life.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

The development described above can be found in the first three Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew. The first Beatitude is: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* This concerns those human beings who after their brave struggle in this world, find themselves defeated, and consciously experiencing being ‘poor in spirit’. It concerns people who, as J van Rijckenborgh says in *The Mystery of the Beatitudes*: *‘...are through experimenting with their humanistic endeavours. They have come to discover that they are dwellers of Ephesus, i.e. bound by the limitations of a form of goodness which can turn into its opposite at any moment.’*² For: *‘Humanism is that organised goodness which attempts to run evil down, without ever being able to catch it. It is the endeavour of humanism to neutralise evil, but throughout all ages it has never succeeded.’*³

This being stuck in this world leads to an intense distress of the soul, to knowing oneself to be poor in spirit. This humility, the recognition of one’s own weakness and impotence, is a prerequisite for evoking the universal love power. We may think of the eighth Song of Penitence of

the Pistis Sophia, about whom J van Rijkenborgh says: *'She gives up all self-maintenance, right into the most distant corners of her goodness. She surrenders herself and enters the period of humility. She has the courage to accept not-doing with the prayer: "Remember me according to the fullness of thy mercy, because of thy goodness, oh Lord."* In this way, she has in her nature state carried out the greatest deed which she can possibly bring to the Gnosis.⁴

The second Beatitude reads: *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.* This concerns the mourning of the spirit-soul that is torn over the immeasurable suffering of the world and humanity. It is the bogged-down idealist who mourns, moved by inner compassion. Then the Light answers, bringing the comfort of insight. For that is the biggest comfort: to know how one can prepare for rendering true aid. It is a comfort to know that the path of soul liberation can be travelled, and that the liberated soul can use the universal love power.

The third Beatitude is: *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.* When the human being has been linked with the universal love power, he will also receive the strength to use this love light, and to confirm it in nature. The only key to be employed is: meekness. Again we turn to the words Jan van Rijkenborgh spoke to his pupils: *'Meekness is the absolute courage which does not want to force and cannot force, by virtue of a person's inner state. The link with the Kingdom is the first pillar; the strength to accomplish the work is the second pillar. Now this twofold divine grace must be established in nature with meekness. It is with meekness that the victory must be gained.*

Courage, as understood in this nature, is always forcing and often the result of passion. With this kind of courage one is like a

*burglar. It is disruptive and destructive. But the courage that originates from the order of the Spirit of Jesus Christ is the result of a renewed balance of the will. He who is meek is not craving for dazzling and sudden success, because he knows that the lustre of such success soon fades. He who is meek does not become disheartened when the result of his work fails to come, or when his field of work is besieged by satanic driving forces, for behind everything he sees the ultimate attainment of his aim shining as a sun which never sets. [...] Like a still flame the meek one keeps burning in the name of eternity and the consolation of Christ is the fuel that flows to him with a steady regularity.'*⁵

SOURCES:

¹ J van Rijkenborgh, *The Chinese Gnosis*, ch.31. Haarlem, 1996;

² J van Rijkenborgh, *The Mystery of the Beatitudes*, ch. 2. Haarlem, 1979;

³ J van Rijkenborgh, *The Mystery of the Beatitudes*, ch. 4. Haarlem, 1979;

⁴ J van Rijkenborgh, *The Gnostic Mysteries of the Pistis Sophia*, ch.47 (not published yet);

⁵ J van Rijkenborgh, *The Mystery of the Beatitudes*, ch. 6. Haarlem, 1979;

⁶ J van Rijkenborgh, *The Egyptian Arch-Gnosis*, part 2, ch. IX. Haarlem, 1987.

*Look, that is the secret of gnostic pupilship. It lies in being brave, in having courage to persevere in the face of impediments, against all opposition, to persevere in spite of what people may say and in spite of the situations and difficulties that may be gathering around us. If you cannot summon up this courage, if you do not possess this perseverance, if you do not desire to break through, you will never attain Wisdom, never arrive at love for humanity in the sense of the primordial law of the Gnosis. To 'love God above all' means to persevere in spite of everything, even if it sometimes does not suit you with respect to your everyday life. The Wisdom that is of God will come to you if you show this courage of conviction consistently. Then you will have passed the gate.*⁶

MAKING THE BASIS WIDER AND DEEPER

For many years, the third issue of a volume of Pentagram has included a survey of activities the International School of the Golden Rosycross has developed in its working fields during the previous year, presently in 47 countries! In some years, the emphasis was put on the construction and opening of new Conference centres and Centre accommodations, in other years especially the external activities have been put in the limelight. Particularly the latter ones have made the world-encompassing work well-known: symposia, series of lectures, exhibitions, music and drama performances for interested seekers give an impression of the purpose and the practical life of the pupils of the Rosycross.

‘THOSE WHO SEEK, CAN BECOME
ROSICRUCIANS’ (SOFIA DAILY, BULGARIA)

One hundred and fifty Bulgarian pupils and 85 guests from Germany, the Netherlands, Croatia and Serbia had assembled in Lyulin-Sofia for the opening of the first Conference centre in Bulgaria on Friday 28 November 2003. After a small group of nine interested people received the first contact letter in 1997, soon groups of interested people developed in the capital Sofia, in Burgas and Varna on the Black Sea, in Silistra in the Northeast and in Sliven and Stara Zagora in Central Bulgaria. In 1998 the first renewal conference was held and in 2001 the framework of a hotel in Sofia was purchased. Two years of uninterrupted construction were needed to turn the four-story building



into a Conference centre that meets the requirements of the international work of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum. Three floors have been equipped for Temple services, lectures and Centre activities. On the fourth floor there is sleeping accommodation for pupils who have come from far away.

That the spiritual work could develop so rapidly in Bulgaria is among other things due to the great gnostic impulse of the Bogomils (literally translated: Friends of God). That is why Bulgaria is considered the gateway through which the call of the Gnosis reached Europe. Wherever the Light has been shining once, there it will return. Bulgaria is Thrace of antiquity, the country of the mysteries of Dionysus and Orpheus. Thrakia means ‘etheric space’, and also ‘firmament’. To Plato



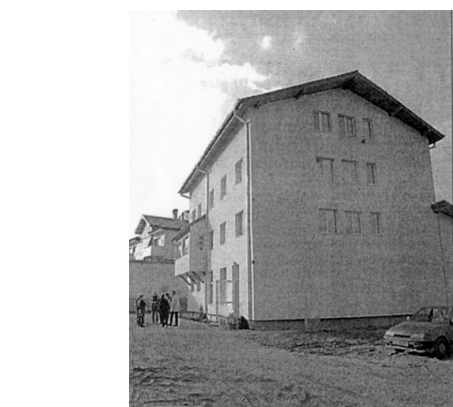
Opening in Sofia, Bulgaria. Photos Pentagram.

Below: Bulgarian daily: 'Those who seek, can become Rosicrucians.'

With deep joy and gratitude in our hearts we invite you to participate in the Inauguration of our Center in Sofia of Lectorium Rosicrucianum - International School of the Golden Rosycross. The Inauguration will take place on the 28th of November 2003 at 18.00 h, and the first Renewal Conference will start in the new Sofia Center in Bulgaria.

Mit grosser Freude und dankbarem Herzen laden wir Sie ein, an der Einweihung unseres Zentrums in Sofia am 28. November 2003 um 18.00 Uhr teilzunehmen. Am selben Wochenende - bis Sonntag mittag - findet die erste Erneuerungskonferenz in unseren eigenen Räumen statt.

С дълбока радост и благодарност в нашите сърца Ви каним да вземете участие в тържественото откриване на нашия Център в София на 28 Ноември, 2003 год. от 18.00 часа. През следващите два дни в новия софийски Център ще се проведе и първата Обновителна Конференция.



27 ноември. Храмът на Ордена на розенкройцерите в жк Люлин вече е готов за първата си служба.

В ЖК Люлин откриват храм на Кръста и розата

Само търсещият човек е важен за розенкройцерите

НЮТОН, ГЪТЕ И ПЕТЪР ДЪНОВ СА БИЛИ В ОРДЕНА

Над 100 чуждестранни гости и духовници ще открият в петък вечерта духовен център на Ордена на розенкройцерите в жк Люлин-6. Това е първата култова сграда на елитното духовно учение у нас и от Германия пристигнаха висшите проповедници Алберт и Гунтер Вилхели. Сградата на центъра е опасана от всички страни от панелната гора, близо до Западен парк. Българската школа на Златния розенкръц е създадена през 1998 г. и броят на последователите ѝ расте. От януари започва първият тримесечен курс, който ще се провежда всяка събота в центъра. Учението на розенкройцерите се основава в 3^{та} 10 г. по. Хр. в Ливиния Фонтан. Развито е в Шулмер. Гонени от официалната църква, розенкройцерите са странници, които твърдят, че притежават световното знание. Най-прочути ученици на тази ираелствена християнска школа са Иса Нютон, Келлер, Френсис Бейкън, поетът Волфганг Гьоте, нашият Петър Дънов.

and his followers, Thrakia is the country of pure teachings and holy enlightenment. Bulgaria is also the country of the Paulicians and the Messianists who carried out the gnostic-Christian work during the first centuries of the Christian era. In the Middle Ages the Bogomils

took over the torch and later passed it on to the Cathars. In the twentieth century the spiritual leader Peter Deunov (1864-1944) assembled over 40,000 pupils, with whom he experienced a new gnostic impulse. An hour before the Russian Secret Service was going to arrest him, he died.

The police report mentioned as one of his statements: *'My pupils are in this world, but not of this world.'*

In his opening address, Mr G Friedrich, member of the Presidium, said: *'In each of us an aspect of the original Divine human being, of Dionysus, is living. In him our microcosms are linked. In the divine life wave of original humanity we are one. [...] By that which we are experiencing here together this evening, the mystery of Dionysus-Orpheus-Christ is once again linked with the Bulgarian land. A foundation has been laid and by working in the service of the Spiritual School, the 'pure etheric space' can be realised again for the seekers in Bulgaria.'*

In *The Topstone* of April 1976, Jan van Rijckenborgh writes in *The Mysteries of Orpheus* about the special nature of this region: *'Thus we begin to comprehend that 12,000 years ago the Orphic and Dionysian mysteries were able to awaken many thousands of people to new life; that here a mighty massive reaction developed, so tremendous that after all these thousands of years the most shocking legends and stories have still been preserved,*

although all those stories have been intertwined by ignorant stragglers. Thousands of years ago this part of the world was one tremendous focus of universal intervention. And the nations living in this large region have experienced its mercy. Egypt, Canaan, Syria, Persia as well as the southern Balkan were like one great harvest field for the holy mysteries of the Universal Brotherhood. We may state that the harvest of that period was running far into the tens of thousands of souls liberated unto the new life.'

During the consecration of the Temple, Mr A H van den Brul of the International Spiritual Directorate spoke the following words: *'During the Middle Ages Bulgaria was called "the source of heretic developments", against which the church launched bloody persecutions. However, we can state that the Light of the Gnosis has again been ignited in the Bulgarian land and that the call of the Friends of God has never been totally extinguished. That the torch always continues to be carried on, in spite of the overwhelming forces of counternature, can certainly be noticed in the work of Peter Deunov who has carried out a great preparatory work here. Once he spoke the words: "Your Soul is a Rosebud that is waiting to blossom forth. Concentrate your consciousness on it, then you will experience the greatest moment of your life. You will open your Soul for the rays of the Universal Sun that illuminates the Divine World." Well, friends, the seed that has been spread in the Bulgarian land throughout the ages, has germinated again. It is the basis with which the Brotherhood of the Golden Rosycross is and will be linked. By putting this important Centre focal point in Sofia in the Bulgarian working field into use, the Light has*

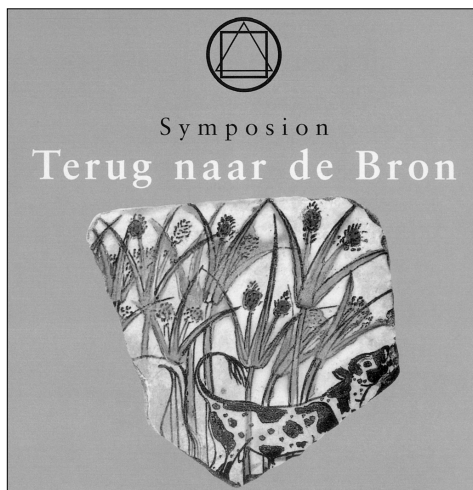


been kindled again. Friends, we have entered a period of strong gnostic turbulence. The Spiritual School clearly and positively manifests itself in a sevenfold way. It possesses a large number of these focal points in almost all of Europe, North and South America and Africa in order to reap the harvest of this and future times.' Mr van den Brul finished his address by a Bogomil prayer:

*'Purify me, o my God,
purify me inwardly and outwardly,
purify Body, Soul and Spirit,
so that the nucleus of Light within me
will grow and turn me into a torch.
May I be my own Flame
in order to lead everything
within and around me to the Light.'*

CONFERENCE DAY J. VAN RIJCKENBORGH
CENTRE

On Sunday 12 January 2003, three lectures about the life and work of Jan van Rijckenborgh were held in the J. van Rijckenborgh Centre in Haarlem. *'In close co-operation with Z W Leene and Catharose de Petri,'* the invitation for this well-attended day stated, *'J van Rijckenborgh founded a modern Mystery School, in which transfiguration is the central issue. He explained the mysteries of the classical Rosicrucians as a living, necessary factor for the modern seeker. This universal mystery finds its pinnacle in the birth, the genesis and the resurrection of a new human type: the inner human being, the Aquarius human being. The School of the Golden Rosycross is active in 47 countries; daily, many thousands of pupils are intensely involved in the change from nature human being into Spirit-Soul Man.'*



Programme of
the symposium
Back to the Source

BACK TO THE SOURCE

A symposium with the theme *Back to the Source* was held at Conference centre Renova in Bilthoven in May 2003. A quest was undertaken for the common roots of the early Christian Gnosis, Sufism and modern gnostic thinking. Those roots have been found in writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. Professor G Quispel spoke about the poetic and far-reaching philosophy of Valentine, one of the most profound representatives of hermetic wisdom and author of *The Gospel of Truth*. Professor Quispel remarked that Valentine's teachings have a link with the Egyptian mysteries.

Professor J Witteveen showed that 'the hermetic wisdom has profoundly enriched Sufism. The influence of Hermetism on religion and literature was larger in the Middle East than in the West, where hermetic writings did not become known until the fourteenth and fifteenth century.

In the third lecture, Mr J R Ritman referred to the perspective for the future that lies hidden in 4500 years of hermetic thinking. Crossing the threshold of the third millennium involves a big challenge: return of and to the Arch-Gnosis. The rich hermetic tradition answers the question of who and what



Group of Young Pupils together in Conference centre Pedra Angular in Jarinu, Brazil.

the human being is. Inner depth and spiritual elevation require the formation of a new community of people, an hermetic original community, a new community of Hermes.

YOUNG PUPILS ACTIVE IN BRAZIL AND FRANCE

In July, a group of about 100 young pupils and staff members renewed the Conference centre of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. Outside walls were painted, fences repaired and the garden done up.

In La Licorne, the Conference centre in the south of France, young pupils from 17 countries gathered in August for the European summer conference week of 2003. During this inspired gathering in great heat – temperatures hardly ever dropped under 35 degrees Centigrade – the driveway and paths were cleaned and repaired, a large number of odd jobs was done, a cottage for water supply was built and preparations were made for the construction of a bookstore. A few thirty meter high trees were felled, because they obstructed the drainage of rain water.

Centre building in Koblenz, Germany.

NEW BUILDING FOR CENTRE KOBLENZ ON THE RHINE

After three years, the new Centre in Koblenz had already become too small, after it had been moved into in October 1999. And thus a new building has been put into use on Sunday 31 August 2003. With an area of 305 m² it provides sufficient space for further expansion. The new Centre building is beautifully located on the Schloss Strasse in the pedestrian zone right in the centre of town. The many windows on the third floor look out on a quiet courtyard. The rooms are high and light and have been furnished very tastefully. The landlord of the premises wrote: *'Without exaggeration we might say that something spiritual has become visible and tangible here. As a professional craftsman I admire the very detailed workmanship.'* There is ample room for lectures, various Centre meetings, information courses and discussion groups.

MEETING OF PHYSICIANS AND THERAPISTS FROM 12 COUNTRIES

Over 160 participants attended the international symposium of physicians in the Lectorium Rosicrucianum, held in Conference centre Christianopolis in Birnbach, Germany, during the weekend of

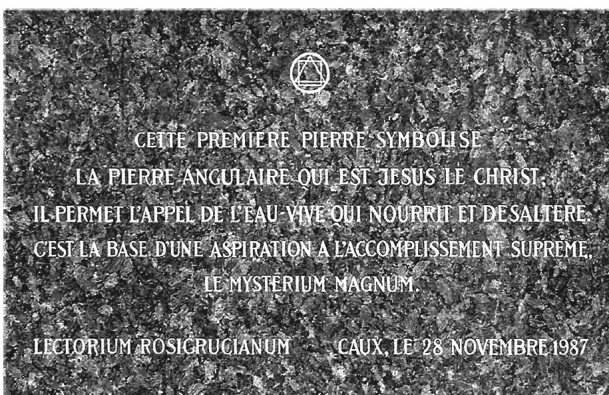


30-31 August 2003. The theme was: the physical and spiritual function of the heart. Reports about the developments and experiences of the past five years were presented in four languages. In her closing words, Mrs E T Hamelink-Leene said: *'During all your work, do remember that the power of divine intuition will grant you the insight how you should act. The power of the Well of Bethesda is nourished and supported in many ways. Do know that the power available for the patient who focuses on it, is an impersonal power.'*

FOYER CATHAROSE DE PETRI IN CAUX EXISTS 25 YEARS

On 9 September 1978, the first Temple in the former Grand Hotel in Caux, Switzerland, was consecrated. On 22 January 1989 the present Temple followed: the seventh Main Temple in the Gnostic Working Field. Earlier, renewal conferences were held in Zurich.

During the Interbellum the hotel was known as Hotel Régina. Originally it was referred to as the Grand Hotel and was considered as one of the most spacious and comfortable hotels of Switzerland. When it was built, there was only a path along which asses with building materials had to climb up. Queen Elisabeth of Great Britain stayed as a young girl in the Grand Hotel, Empress Sissi of Austria chose it as her residence. In 1899 an extra floor and two towers were added. The hotel had 400 rooms. In 1947 it was purchased by the Society for Moral Rearmament and in 1978 it passed into the hands of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum. The state of maintenance and the purpose envisaged required radical restoration: the roof had to be renewed, just as the elevator. Outside walls, staircases, passages and rooms were tackled, the central heat-



ing installation was renewed and the authorities required an underground shelter (presently used as a garage). New projects for the near future are amongst other things the sanitary fittings and the central heating that could not be tuned very well.

Soon the temporary Temple proved to be too small. Plans were drafted for a separate Temple complex outside the main building. This magnificent work of construction was consecrated for its task by Catharose de Petri on 22 January 1989.

CENTRE BONN STRONGLY EXPANDED

For a year pupils of the Centre Bonn have built and painted to prepare their new accommodation for its task. The old building had clearly become too small. During the nine years of working there the number of pupils had grown by 50%. On 21 September 2003, the doors of the new

This foundation stone symbolises the cornerstone that is Jesus the Christ.

Conference centre Foyer Catharose de Petri, Caux, Switzerland.



Centre building in Bonn, Germany.



Centre of Bonn on the easily accessible Hohe Strasse could be opened. Approximately 200 guests had come for the festive opening, all of whom could be seated in the new Temple for 160 people.

CENTRE MILAN IN A NEW BUILDING

In September 1981 the first public lecture of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum in Italy could be held in Milan. On 10 December 1983 the Centre Milan has been founded and consecrated as the first Centre accommodation in Italy. In 1989 a new building was bought and equipped for Centre activities and Renewal conferences. These have been held until 1995, when *La Nuova Arca* in Dovadola became the national Conference centre. Because of this, the accommodation in Milan became too big and a new building was looked for. On 25 September 2003, the Italian pupils,

Invitation for the opening in Milan.

and especially those of Milan, could open the doors of this beautiful new Centre building.

‘LIVING STONES ARE ABLE TO BUILD THE TEMPLE’

This was the theme of the celebration of the tenth anniversary of Centre Eindhoven on Dierenriemstraat on 16 September 2003. The Centre building in Eindhoven was the first one in the Netherlands that could be designed and shaped entirely after our own wishes and needs. Almost all pupils and members, as well as many ‘builders of the first hour’ attended a cold buffet to look back and to look ahead. A well-attended open afternoon followed on Sunday 21 September, for which all neighbours received a personal invitation.

The work in Eindhoven started on 9 September 1979 in a former factory hall on Kleine Berg. This fulfilled an explicit wish of Jan van Rijckenborgh. He considered Brabant as ‘a bridgehead’ for the expansion of the Spiritual School in a southern direction.

In 1989 the Centre moved to Tèllegenstraat and in 1993 the pupils of the region Eindhoven had their own building on Dierenriemstraat at their disposal. Centre





leader Herman Tomesen explained: *'It is a nice looking, modern, multifunctional accommodation, in which we feel totally at home. An oasis in the desert! But it is of course the pupils who truly vivify the building. Our group is a happy combination of different types of people. In addition to the mentality of the Kempen with a slightly Burgundian touch, there is the straightforwardness and decisiveness of those coming from above the great rivers. That mixture often provides an inspiring energy.'*

CONFERENCE CENTRE IN ORISTANO
(SARDINIA) NOW PURCHASED

On 20 September 1997 a modest building in Oristano was rented in order to save the pupils on Sardinia from the long journeys to conferences in Conference centre *La Nuova Arca* in Dovadola. A small Temple was consecrated that can be used for local conferences. Sufficient sleeping accommodation was lacking, however. This small complex has now been bought and completely refurbished by the Italian pupils of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum.

'IN YOUR LIGHT WE WILL BEHOLD THE LIGHT'

In November more than 450 guests had gathered in Conference centre Renova for a symposium about Robert Fludd (1574-1637), also called De Fluctibus, protagonist of the hermetic body of ideas of the classical Rosicrucians. Fludd devoted a large part of his life to writing explanations and defences of the Brotherhood of the Rosycross.

In all his publications he demonstrated a profound, encyclopaedic knowledge of the laws of microcosm and macrocosm. During a slide show it was shown how all-encompassing and fundamentally correct his insight was and how his work and efforts have contributed to the dissemination of the often not-understood wisdom of the Brotherhood of the Rosycross.

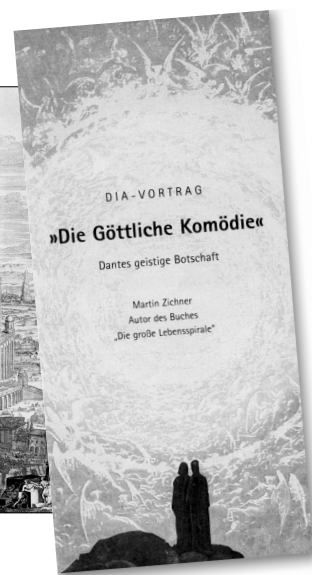
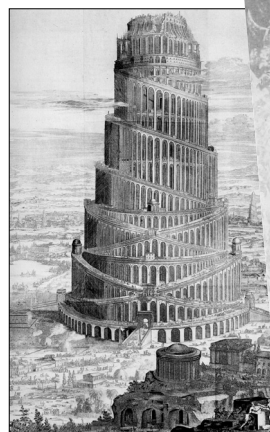
In the garden of Centre Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

Accommodation in Oristano, Sardinia.



In Fludd's book *Summum Bonum* (1629), we can find a representation of the Rosycross in the form of a rose with 7x7 petals between beehives and cobwebs. One bee is sitting on the rose, another one is flying toward it. In the background on the right we see four beehives with bees, and on the left a palisade with cobwebs. The aphorism reads: 'The rose gives honey to the bees.' The rose is the symbol of the rose power, the wisdom of the Rosicrucians. The bee symbolises diligence. It stores the collected honey in hives and can draw from it when times become more forbidding. The worker bee works for its queen. It sacrifices its life for her progeny. This may be interpreted as a higher goal that is striven after.

The counterpart of the bee is the spider. It makes a web just as the bee honeycombs. But it does not do this to collect the sweet honey of the roses, but to bleed insects dry that have been caught. The final product of the spider is lethal poison, the final product of the bee is new life.



NEW DEVELOPMENTS ON THE BALKAN

During the past year Centres have been opened in Maribor and Belgrade. The number of pupils and interested people has grown rapidly and plans for new extensions are being developed. In this context a new Temple and sleeping accommodation are being prepared amongst other things.

TEMPORARY TEMPLE IN MELBOURNE (AUSTRALIA)

Pupils in Australia have succeeded in renting some modest space that could be turned into a Temple. Renewal conferences will also be held here.

DANTE AND THE TOWER OF BABEL

In Graz, Cultural Capital of Europe 2003, the theme *The Tower of Babel* has been exhibited in an impressive way. Simultaneously the Austrian pupils presented a slide show about Dante's *Divina Commedia*. Both manifestations formed a perfect match. It is assumed that the spiral construction of the tower, which can be seen in so many paintings from the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, have been derived from the double spiral of the

Turrus Babel.
Athanasius
Kircher,
Amsterdam, 1679.



Accommodation
in Melbourne,
Australia.

Inferno and Purgatorio in Dante's *Divina Commedia*. This link was clearly expressed by the slides and the text which the audience followed with great interest.

KOSZALIN – FOURTH CENTRE IN POLAND

In the beginning of January 2004 we received the following message from Koszalin in North Poland: 8 January 2004, Koszalin (Poland). At last 35 pupils in Northern Poland have their own Centre at their disposal. It can be found in the town of Koszalin on the Baltic, between Gdansk and Szczecin. Until recently most pupils of this group belonged to the Centre Wroclaw. They had to travel 415 km to attend Temple services and other meetings. Their joy about the new, modern, light accommodation is tremendous. The opening of the Centre was attended by members of the International Spiritual Directorate, the Presidium and pupils from the other three Polish Centres. The buffet was overwhelming, also on the open day preceding the consecration. Numerous guests, amongst whom representatives of the authorities, the neighbours, relatives and friends of pupils, listened to speeches about the Spiritual School and about the Polish gnostic tradition. And at the end, a magnificent Chopin recital was given by a Polish pupil.

CENTRE RENNES (FRANCE) NOW HAS A NEW, OWN BUILDING

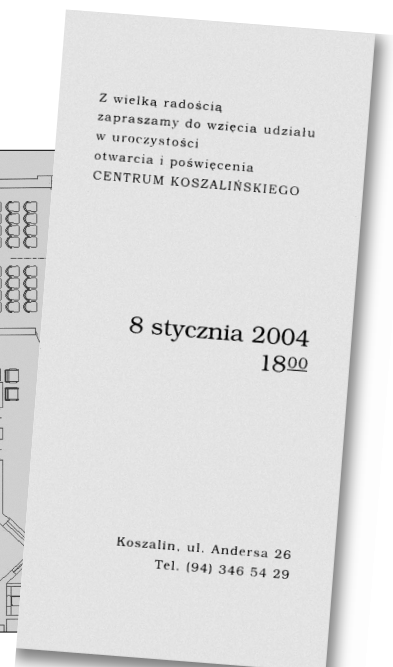
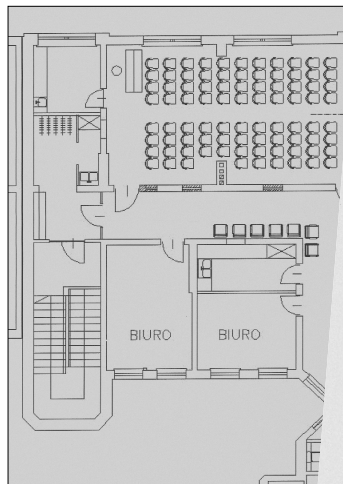
January 3rd, 2004, Rennes (France): Rennes has a beautiful own Centre home, surrounded by a beautiful, spacious garden! On 24 June 2000 the old Centre building on rue Vasselot has been vacated. In November 1999, a plot on rue Fougères could be bought and a



building plan was drafted. The original drafts with a Temple in the garden did not meet with the approval of the authorities. Now a Temple for 50 people in the form of a pentagram has been situated in the heart of the building, with a possibility for expansion to 80 seats. On 3 January last, pupils from the Netherlands, Switzerland and France assembled for the consecration of this new Centre building to its important task in Western France.

The new Centre building in Rennes, France.

Floor plan of Centre Koszalin, Poland.



THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES AND THE HUMAN BEING

Once in a while everyone has experienced the strong influence of music. This may vary from very sublime to satanic. Sometimes music can give rest, sometimes joy, but also sadness. Music can even depress a human being. Music with a chaotic basis may throw a soul into chaos.

There is constantly sound in and around us. Tones of different pitch and loudness. Most sounds are not noticed by our consciousness. We are used to them. The rustling of water, the song of a bird, footsteps, chinking glass, squeaking hinges, car engines, human voices. All these sounds determine the permanent background of our daily lives. But silence is also sound, albeit of a totally different vibration. The cosmos also produces a sound, the whole universe is singing, but our hearing is unable to perceive that jubilant song.

The cosmos is controlled by the law of harmony. All creatures experience consciously or unconsciously that there is a link between their lives and that of the gods. Already in the distant past, human beings have been shown that breaking that harmonious interaction will harm the heavens and anger the gods. That is why the vibration of creation must be equal to that of its creatures.

Sounds are related to each other as forces. Harmonious merging of sounds has a strong, positive effect; dissonants

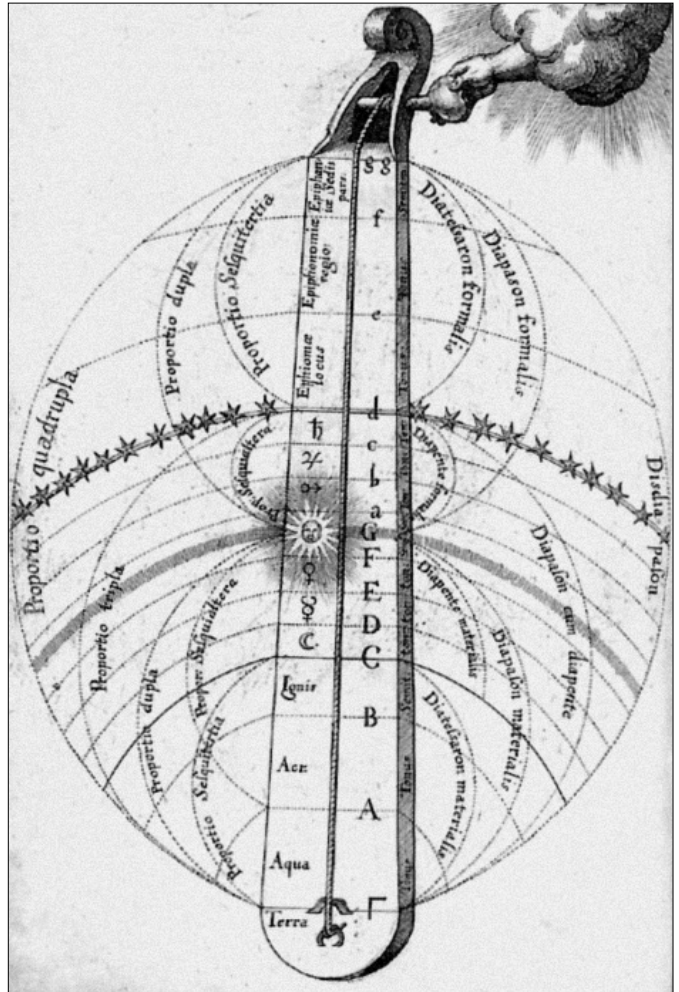
have a disturbing effect and are destructive. In *The Secret Doctrine*, part I, H P Blavatsky writes that Pythagoras had worked out the relationship between music and the cosmos into all details. *'Pythagoras esteemed the Deity, the Logos, to be the centre of unity and source of harmony. [...] And this is also why it was required of the candidate, who applied for admittance into the mysteries, that he should have already studied as a preliminary step, the sciences of arithmetic, astronomy, geometry and music, held as the four divisions of mathematics. [...] The Pythagoreans asserted that the world had been called forth out of chaos by sound or harmony, and constructed according to the principles of musical proportion; that the seven planets have a harmonious motion, and that, according to Censorine, intervals corresponding to musical diastemes, rendering various sounds, so perfectly consonant, that they produce the sweetest melody, which is inaudible to us, only by reason of the greatness of the sound, which our ears are incapable of receiving.'*

Pythagoras considered music as a flow of interrupted and uninterrupted sounds. This flow corresponds to the pitches and intervals of the scales. The intervals are related to the spiritual development of humanity and the harmony of the cosmos. Pythagoras defined the distance between the Moon and the Earth as one tone; that between the Moon and Mercury and between Mercury and Venus as half tones, between Venus and the Sun as one and a

half tone, between the Sun and Mars as one tone, between Mars and Jupiter and between Jupiter and Saturn both as half tones and between Saturn and the Zodiac as one and a half tone. These tones together form an octave, the basis of harmony in the universe.

According to the ancient Greeks, gods and music were closely linked. The god Apollo carried a lyre as a symbol of his victory over chaos. When Apollo is going to play, all creatures fall silent and listen. All conflicts are over and even the war god Ares stops his bloodshed. Apollo's music lifts the human spirit up and brings tranquillity to the soul. The soul that experiences the harmony now also beholds the whole cosmos (cosmos means order). In the Orphic mysteries also Dionysus appears, who leads the human being to ecstasy. According to the author J van Rijckenborgh, Dionysus was 'the tempestuous driver of the spirit. Whoever studies this figure, can without fantasising determine that Dionysus represents the activity of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit that blows as a storm over the world, arousing dialectical human beings everywhere.' (*The Topstone*, 1976)

One day the satyr Marsyas – symbol of the human being who is half human, half animal – found a flute that had been cast away by Athena. He started to play on it and soon he thought nothing of engaging in a contest with Apollo. That audacity was severely punished, because no one can be greater than God and his



music. Orpheus, to whose singing humans and animals surrender, is a symbol of the human being who understands the divine harmony. His spiritual faculties are so great that even the spirits of hell fall silent in order to listen to his singing. Orpheus can pass through hell, because he is accompanied by divine sounds and all fear has left him.

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD

God, the unknowable cause of the All, set atoms in motion. When matter is moved, it generates sound. In the first book of *Pyramander* (verses 9 and 10) Hermes says: 'Shortly afterwards, a terrible and melancholic darkness came into being in a part of it. It bent itself downwards and rotated in

Music of the spheres, depicted by Robert Fludd in *Utriusque Cosmi*, 1617.

Pythagoras demonstrates his theory of music. Woodcarving in *Theorica musica* by F Gaffurio, Milan, 1492.

tortuous spirals, just like a snake, it seemed to me. Then this darkness changed into a moist and inexpressibly disordered nature, from which smoke arose as from fire, while emitting a sound like some indescribable groaning. Then a cry resounded from out of the moist nature, a wordless call which I compared with the voice of the fire, while from out of the light a holy word spread itself over nature and a pure fire darted on high out of the moist nature, light, fierce and mighty.'

In the 'earth-circle of the archetypes' (J van Rijckenborgh, *The Coming New Man*, p.71), the archetypes of everything created are living. Each archetype vibrates in its own way and has its own tone. The atoms this archetype attracts, are attuned to this vibration in the proper

form. It is a living and vibrating divine plan with regard to every human being.

Through the archetype the human being can experience divine harmony and lead it to manifestation within himself.

EACH CREATURE HAS ITS OWN BASIC TONE

Often the human being has been compared with a musical instrument. In the sense of that metaphor he is not aware of it, however. Besides, his instrument is damaged, so that the divine harmony cannot evoke the right resonance. The human brain has seven cavities that are filled with ethers. Each cavity has its own tone that corresponds with the tones of the sevenfold scale. In addition, every human being has its own basic tone.

All these tones have to fulfil their specific task according to their place in the divine plan. When the brain cavities are filled with earthly ethers, they are unable to react to the call from the Original Field of Life. Then the serpent fire which, if we pursue this metaphor, can be seen as the tuning fork in the human being, does not create a pure resonance. Then the essence of the human being produces a false tone. And because the human being cannot resound with the divine, he can only maintain himself. Then we can no longer speak of any form of higher life. Yet, premembrance tells us that once our essence was resounding in the harmony of the spheres. Musical instruments and written music can be seen as a reaction to that premembrance.

PYTHAGORAS BEGAN HIS DAY WITH MUSIC

Porphyrius, Pythagoras' biographer, tells that Pythagoras began his lessons by play-



ing the lyre and singing ancient melodies. Partly this was meant to forget sadness, to calm anger and to quench passions, but also to honour the gods with his singing. Harmonious sounds have a direct and positive effect on the ethers and help the human being to attune the seven tones of his own system in the correct way and to attract the corresponding forces. An echo of this effect can be found in the religious practices of all nations in all times.

Because each race has its own ether conditions, the instruments and scales used are also different. In some countries instruments that indicate rhythm are dominant, while in others it is mainly the melody that matters. But this does not mean that this music is attuned to the divine harmony and that it can bring about positive results.

CAN WE RETURN TO THE PRIMORDIAL HARMONY?

Something of the divine life still exists in the human being as a spark that belongs to that primordial realm. That spark can only be awakened and aroused, if the human being is going to attune himself to the divine harmony again. Then he is linked with the power of the Christ, with the basic tone of divine Love. We could imagine this as a string that constantly vibrates, although this will not be the case in the beginning yet. That process of harmonisation must be supported by transformation of the whole being, so that a new consciousness, the gnostic consciousness, can be born. Then we may say that the human being can again resound as an instrument in the primordial harmony of the spheres. J van Rijckenborgh describes this process in part I of *The Egyptian Arch-Gnosis*, p.19: 'A luminous structure

'It is possible that a composer or musician blessed by the Gnosis may serve as a focus for rays emanating from the harmony of the spheres, from the essence of the primal melody's sevenfold pattern. Such a musical genius might well be able to place every note in its proper place, although we must add in the same breath that the divine sphere does not easily allow itself to be limited. But to be able to tell whether the gnostic plenitude is indeed reflected in a sublime classical repertoire, one would at least have to know that plenitude in its entirety.'

(From: *Letters*, Catharose de Petri, Rozekeuis Pers, 1997)

of force lines arises when the hermetic consciousness directs itself to the Spirit. In this way the Spirit fire is ignited (as in a flame – ed.) in the focal point of their encounter. Then the hermetic human being will meet Pymander. From this structure of force lines a power, a vibration flows into the hermetic human being. This vibration has a sound and a colour that totally correspond to the motivation with which the hermetic human being lifts himself up into the Spirit field. Thus this encounter, this manifestation is of a very individual nature. Only in this way God speaks to the human being. It is finding and hearing the Ineffable Name.'

THE PROPHET

Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837)

When I went out in search of the spirit
and laboured through deserts of forsaken sand
I reached the limit of my land
where, carried upon six wings,
an angel stood before me.

His outstretched fingers light and slender
brushed my eyes like a passing dream
and suddenly did arise the insight
that dawned like a new faculty.

One light pressure on both my ears
submerged me in a sea of sound.
Now I could hear the movement of the spheres,
where angels soared in azure heights
and creatures lived in the deepest darkness,
a rustling full of promise
of distant grape vines.

Then he bent down and gripped my sinful tongue,
that source so full of cunning, deceit and pride
and took it away, left me an open wound
and with his hand, still stained with my blood
he granted me then the sting of wisdom
and placed it in my lifeless mouth.
His sharp sword had already cut my breast,
he took from me my trembling heart,
a spark of divine fire
he fastened in my breast,
while in death's swoon I lay.

Now I heard God call and say:
'Arise, prophet, arise and see.
Go hence and travel over land and sea
and proclaim my Word
to human hearts.'

(Translation Pentagram)

The prophet, bronze by Pablo Cargallo, 1933.

Right: Seraph with six wings. Each wing represents a virtue.
Painting on parchment, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris.





Co. totum in hoc pingu
Vicia tollitur abiaci.
In innocentia uiuere.
Et cetera viuere.
Cetera conuolere.

Contemplatio superiorum!

Blasphemia non committi.
Commissa mala mouere.
Sperantur a seculi ceteris.
Sperantur a seculi ceteris.

Spes premium!

Lenitas sapientiae

Et cum in auctis ponat
Hoc in auctis et diligere
Consilium hanc et parat
Et c. prouidentia et hanc
Et cum in auctis ponat

Virtus uirtutis

Et in domino uirtutis
Virtutem confectum
Iudicium non reuocantur
A uirtutis non reuocantur
Fecit fecit in uirtute

Modus temperantiae

Et in domino in agere in
Et in domino in agere in
Et in domino in agere in
Et in domino in agere in
Et in domino in agere in

Vigor fortitudinis

Et in domino in agere in
Et in domino in agere in
Et in domino in agere in
Et in domino in agere in
Et in domino in agere in

Senex, ut habens ut alas
Legatur per uirtutem
Ite autem alligatum

NIKOLAI BERDJAJEV — PHILOSOPHER OF FREEDOM

Nikolai Berdjajev, born on March 6th, 1874 in Kiev, was one of the most incisive and radical Russian thinkers. His writings are permeated with an unquenchable urge to freedom, thus, he is sometimes called 'the philosopher of freedom'. Berdjajev was an independent thinker. He knew no compromise. He has been rejected by both tsarism and Communism.

In spite of everything, Berdjajev remained linked with the Russian-orthodox church throughout his entire life. But the church never knew whether he was a 'faithful son' – or 'a heretic' to be banished. Via Germany, where he founded an academy for religious philosophy, he travelled to France, where he stayed until his death in 1948. His works have been translated into many languages, making him well known to the entire world. Thanks to many reprints, Berdjajev's insights and ideas have come fully into the limelight again. His ideas about freedom stem from profound self-knowledge, and his struggle to know the purpose of life, especially in the sense of human existence. He wrote: *'Freedom presupposes the existence of a spiritual principle which is determined neither by nature, nor by society. Freedom is a spiritual principle within a human being. When a human being is entirely determined by nature and society, freedom is impossible.'*

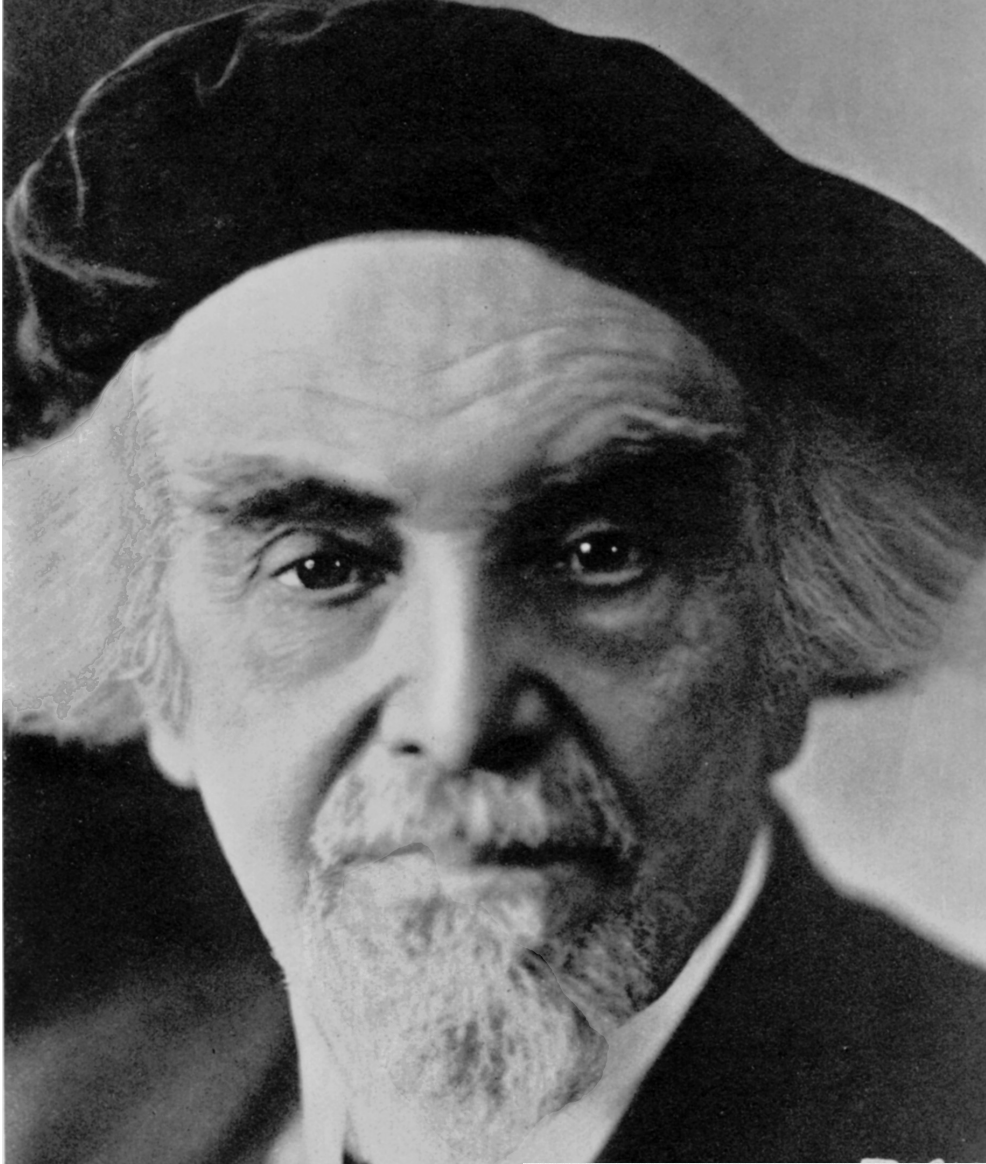
In his book *Self-knowledge* (1953) he

'Knowledge is necessary to protect ourselves against the hostile powers of nature. Not only is knowledge of the mechanisms of nature necessary, providing us with technology, but also knowledge of the inner life of the cosmos and of the inner structure of the world. For this knowledge people must be spiritually prepared; a human being must have the mind of Christ, not a natural, rational mind about which the Vatican council speaks, but an enlightened mind. Then humanity no longer runs the risk of being torn to pieces by the cosmic forces, or falling under the power of demons. The Christian Gnosis is a gnosis which is based on the acquisition of the consciousness of Christ, of the God-human knowledge in and through Christ.'

(From: *Freedom and Spirit*, p. 322)

writes: *'O Eternity, I love you, Zarathustra says. This is what I have been saying all my life. One can love nothing but eternity, and nothing can be loved except with eternal love. If eternity does not exist, there is nothing. The spirit yearns for eternity. Matter, however, knows only transience.'*

He did not consider life, but freedom, the basis of philosophy. Freedom, however, causes suffering. Freedom is an inner longing which manifests itself, as soon as restrictions are imposed upon it. Many think that freedom is a natural, self-evident and simple good, but it can also be a



The Russian philosopher
Berdjajev

heavy burden one only too gladly throws off in the hope of easing one's fate. For Berdjajev it is a force originating from another dimension. Outside the 'realm of Caesar', the world built by power, he saw the 'realm of the Spirit'. *'The existence of God is manifested by the existence of humanity. And God is not a nature power, nor a social power nor a power of the state.'*

Berdjajev was driven by a vague longing. Not the sadness of someone who misses or has lost something. Neither was it due to lack of earthly wealth, or the result of a melancholic temperament. He described this enduring feeling as a painful longing for the transcendent. It was his constant companion, which sti-

Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdjajev was born on March 6th, 1874 in Oboe-chovo, near Kiev. Under the influence of the Russian religious philosopher Vladimir Soloviev he occupied himself with religious questions. In 1919 he founded the Moscow Free Academy for Spiritual Culture. Because its 'ideological activity was hostile to Communism' he was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1922. He went to Berlin and founded the Academy of Religious Philosophy and co-operated in the establishment of the Russian Scientific Institute. In 1924 he moved to Paris and founded an Academy of Religious Philosophy there also. On 23 March 1948 he died in Clamart near Paris.

'The science of the mysteries of cosmic life was banned by ecclesiastical thinking. The dogmatic work of the teachers of religion and the ecumenical councils included nothing gnostic. Formulas for the ordinary religious experience were developed and this development occurred in the way of a refutation of dogmas reputed to be false.'

(From: *Freedom and Spirit*)

mulated his spiritual development. His longing was sometimes acute, sometimes it receded to the background, but when he felt happy it always announced itself with great force. Then it reminded him of the torments of his life. In *The Meaning of History* (1950) he wrote: *'An irreconcilable antithesis exists between time and eternity. Time is as it were the negation of eternity, a certain state which is not rooted in eternal life.'*

To Berdjajev, human beings are microcosms composed of divine, earthly, human and personality structures. He sought to understand the purpose of human life during the era in which he lived. *'The exploration of the world as such, the way it is, has never interested me. But the destiny of the world and of myself has; hence "the end of things" interests me. My philosophy is not scientific, but prophetic and eschatological [...] Thirty years ago I thought I knew much more than I, knowing the current level of my knowledge, believe I know [...] I begin to realise that I know nothing.'* (Self-knowledge, 1950). Everything that happened to him and to the people of his time he related to the development from human being to Divine Man. *'Due to an inferior and a superior I, I have been frequently disappointed in people; I have experienced much lowness, falseness, baseness, harshness, treason, and countless disappointments in my con-*

tacts with other people, and I myself have been guilty of causing these disappointments. Yet I preserve my belief in the divine plan of development for humanity.' (Self-knowledge, 1950)

Self-knowledge was for Berdjajev the only means to arrive at the 'unchangeable'. 'Man, know thyself' is the starting point of philosophical reflection. It starts with insight into oneself, then insight into humanity and the world follows. He described the essence of it as: *'I found the significance of my existential thinking, when I discovered that there are two paths: the path of objectivity and the path of transcendence. The first one is that of being prisoner of a ghostly power and of gravity. The second one lies in an ideal and liberated world, in the divine world. Not only creative ideas, but also creative passion must break open the chrysalised consciousness and make the objective world of that consciousness fluid. I could only maintain myself by seeking divine truth.'* (Self-knowledge, 1950)

'Just as nature has a rhythm, history also has a rhythm, a rhythmic course of periods and cultures. Ebb and flow, ascent and decline, rhythm and periodicity are the essence of all life.' In *The Meaning of History* Berdjajev described how, with the fall of the Roman empire, an ancient culture came to an end. Then came the Middle Ages, a 'period of darkness' according to him, during which all the established values of an era were lost. Everything that had previously had value, became worthless. Around the beginning of the twentieth century humanity entered a new 'period of darkness':

'All signs indicate that we have already entered the period of darkness. The veils of illusion have fallen away, uncovering good and evil.' This new time, however, is already rife with ideas which will characterise the coming period. Old and new ideas are clashing and making people un-

'The appearance of Christ, of the divine human being, is the perfect union of two movements, from God to the human being and from the human being to God; the definitive birth of God in the human being and of the human being in God, the realisation of the twofoldness, the mystery of the divine human being.'

(From: *Freedom and Spirit*, p. 214)

certain. This period is, at the same time, forcing humanity to positively reflect upon its origins. Seldom has humanity had a better opportunity to investigate its origins and to understand its aim in life.

The periods of civilisation, which he defined as 'diurnal hours' are more superficial and often give little insight into the development of humanity. The period in which nuclear energy was discovered and released, was such a period. Science started to unravel relationships and to reduce composite elements to extremely small particles from which matter is formed. These efforts were accompanied by an unprecedented degree of individualism and isolation.

At present we are, therefore, living in a period of darkness. In such a period the abyss is broken open and humanity is faced with existence in a world of tremendous suffering. There are two possible reactions to this: being terrified or turning to the Spirit of God. For the first group Berdjajev wrote in *The Realm of the Spirit and the Realm of Caesar* (1952): *'The pragmatic idea that truth could be useful for life is a mistake. Truth can be detrimental to the organisation of daily life. Christian truth could even be very dangerous. For this reason humanity has adapted the pure truth of Christianity to everyday human life and has distorted it to the extent that a correction to Christ's work*

was made, as the Grand-Inquisitor in Dostojevsky's story said.'

The second group consists of people who do not recoil from the edge of the abyss. They take heed of this sign of the times and a longing of untold pain touches them. Thanks to that longing the Spirit of God can approach and penetrate those human beings. Berdjajev: *'When we believe in salvation through truth, we do so in a different sense. Through truth there is a separation between that which is "of God" and that which is "of Caesar", between the Spirit and the world.'* Truth can only be perceived when people attain a high level, the level on which Truth can be received! People can only attain that peak together with others, after which they can rise above both the subjective and the objective worlds. *'There is nothing higher than the search for, and the love of, truth. The one, all-encompassing truth is God, and knowledge of that truth is the entrance into the divine life.'* (*The new Middle Ages*, 1927).

'Christianity is the religion of love, not that of justice. It transcends all laws, both the law of nature and the laws of human justice. Those who have become participants of the mystery of salvation, who have accepted the Christ in themselves and who partake of the people of Christ, are no longer subjected to the law of karma, are no longer obliged to relive the past in infinite evolution, and to overcome it through a systematic, just and continuous process.' (From: *Freedom and Spirit*, p. 313)

NOTHING'S A GIFT

The Polish poetess Wislawa Szymborska is in many ways occupied with seeking answers to vital questions. She writes no more than one poem per year, yet she is immensely popular, and not only in Poland. She received the Nobel Prize for Literature on October 3rd, 1996. When she learned she would receive the prize, she remarked that her quiet life would now become complicated.

Wisława Szymborska prefers to remain in the background. She has written about September 11th, 2001, but seldom participates in literary events and detests politics. Nevertheless what happens in the world touches her profoundly and her poems bear witness to that. She writes about the Ideal Being:

*that has been able to survive endlessly,
hewn out of the darkness,
carved out of the Light,
in its drowsy gardens above the world.
By gosh, why
did it go off on an adventure
in the bad company of matter?*

Wisława Szymborska comes from Kornik near Poznan, in western Poland. She was born July 2nd, 1923 and spent her early years in the small village of Bnin. In 1931 she moved to the former royal city of Krakow. After the Second World War, at the age of twenty-two, she studied Polish literature and sociology there. For twenty-eight years, from 1953 to 1981, she was editor of the periodical *Zycie Literackie*. Her first success came in 1957 with her collection of poems, *Wolanie do Yeti* (freely translated as *The Call of the Yeti*) and with the volume *Sól* (Salt),



THE THREE ODDEST WORDS

*When I pronounce the word Future,
the first syllable already belongs to the
past.*

*When I pronounce the word Silence,
I destroy it.*

*When I pronounce the word Nothing,
I make something no non-being can
hold.*

published in 1962. Since then she has published twelve volumes of poetry, some of which have been translated into German, English and Dutch. In Germany her work was awarded the Goethe Prize of the city of Frankfurt in 1991, and the Herder Prize in 1995.

Her popularity is due to the accessible language that she uses to write about the often complicated questions of existence, which 'great' literature often treats in an obscure manner. '*Her thinking is complex but her language is simple*', stated her German translator when she received the Nobel Prize. Another reason for her popularity, according to critics, is that her work provides a haven for Polish readers. She touches on universal themes in everyone's life that surpass by far the ordinary, or political and religious issues. '*Szymborska is the poetess of the ordinary, of the elusive and of that which cannot be formulated about human existence, of the human being who is astonished about this life and about his being human, which he sees as the result of billions of years of evolution, as the product of history and culture, yet without emphasising the national*

past of Poland', remarks another of her translators.

She observes with benevolent wonder. Her poet's pen is supple and playful. For example: a little girl, about a year old, discovers the force of gravity. She pulls the tablecloth from the table and wonders what the cups and spoons, balanced on the edge, are going to do. '*A little journey along the ceiling? A flight around the lamp? A leap onto the windowsill and then into the tree?*' Or she remembers her fear as a child to step in a puddle and writes:

*I was to take a step,
and suddenly go under completely,
I would fall into the depths
and still deeper,
always deeper,
to the clouds' reflections,
perhaps even further.*

Everything can serve to awaken the wondering of the soul. But the puddle could dry up, and then you could no longer go back. And even when Szymborska is momentarily speechless at the graves of three young children, she is not above acknowledging:

*But what can you say
about a life of only one day,
of only one minute, of only one second?
Darkness, a flash, and again darkness.
Kosmos Makros
Kronos Paradoksos,
only Greek words can be found
to engrave on the stone.*

There is incomprehension and incomprehension. The first type probably shrugs in

Openness in
group unity.
Portugal, photo
Pentagram.

the face of so much accumulated reality. The second one, Szyborska's incomprehension, doesn't even think of shrugging its shoulders. Given the chance, it bows before reality when it knocks. While life may perhaps be incomprehensible, the questions it evokes are not. For example the soul is an elusive matter, but in *A Few Words on the Subject of the Soul* she writes:

*She is seldom by our side
during drudgery
like moving furniture
and lifting trunks
or walking in too-tight shoes.*

Her subtle approach conceals an implicit understanding of the soul, as is shown in *Our Ancestors' Short Lives*:

*Good and evil –
they knew little of them, but knew all:
when evil triumphs, good goes into hiding;
when good is manifest, then evil lies low.
Neither can be conquered
or cast off beyond return.
Hence, if joy, then with a touch of fear;
if despair, then not without some quiet
hope.
Life, however long, will always be short.
Too short for anything to be added.¹*

What seeker after Truth won't experience a moment of recognition when reading the following poem? The title is *Nothing's a gift*.

*Nothing's a gift, it's all on loan.
I'm drowning in debts up to my ears.
I'll have to pay for myself
with my self,
give up my life for my life.*

*Here's how it's arranged:
The heart can be repossessed,
the liver, too,
and each single finger and toe.*

*Too late to tear up the terms,
my debts will be repaid,
and I'll be fleeced,
or, more precisely, flayed.*

*I move about the planet
in a crush of other debtors.
Some are saddled with the burden
of paying off their wings.
Others must, willy-nilly,
account for every leaf.*

*Every tissue in us lies
on the debit side.
Not a tentacle or tendril
is for keeps.*

*The inventory, infinitely detailed,
implies we'll be left
not just empty-handed
but handless, too.*

*I can't remember
where, when, and why
I let someone open
this account in my name.*

*We call the protest against this
the soul.
And it's the only item
not included on the list.*

SOURCES

Szyborska, Wislawa, Poems New and Collected, 1957-1997, translated by S. Baranczak and C. Cavanagh, Harcourt, Inc., New York, 1998.