

From Gondhishapur to Silicon Valley*

Spiritual Forces in the development of computers and the future of technology

by Paul Emberson

* A well intended but very flawed Book

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After a hundred years of anthroposophical activity, the Anthroposophical Society and Movement lies asleep as to its real condition. Anthroposophical media predominantly puts a good face on everything, and avoids as much as possible critical thinking about its own products. As Irina Gordienko wrote in her lucid and remarkable examination of the real value of Prokofieff's works (S. O. Prokofieff: Myth and Reality):

"When a false or non-proven assertion appears in the scientific press, this is taken as a signal for the opening of a scientific debate, which continues until the matter is resolved, even if further research has to be carried out. It is quite a different situation in the Anthroposophical media. There one can write whatever one likes, provided no interests are put at risk and the familiar terminology is used. Any attempt to criticize such printed assertions is condemned out of a false ethical principal: tolerance towards a person is confused with tolerance of his mistakes. The ideal of brotherly love comes to mean little more than the maintaining of 'diplomatic relations' with ones neighbor, while remaining indifferent to his spiritual destiny.

The situation is, in our opinion, by no means a sign of irresponsibility - this is only secondary - but is rather the expression of a materialism that is deeply rooted in the unconscious, inclining one to experience interpersonal relations in the present as absolutely real, while the working of the counter-forces which stand behind every lie is ignored or is at best passed off as an abstract theory, about which one can hold clever discussions, but which, as soon as one returns to the reality of life, will be forgotten. "An incorrect result of research in the spiritual world is a living being. It is there; it must be resisted, it must first be eradicated: (22.10.1915, GA 254)"

This little essay in no way means to question the good intentions of Paul Emberson in the writing of his book. At the same time, in that Anthroposophy is meant to be science, it becomes necessary to examine whether the product of Emerson's good intentions meets

any standard at all for something which wants to be representative of anthroposophical Spiritual Science. Since it is this author's experience that the fundamentals of Anthroposophy themselves are not well understood in the Society and Movement, here is a recent entry I made on an Internet discussion group focused on Steiner's *The Philosophy of Freedom*. The question was asked there "What is Anthroposophy?", and this was my reply:

"Rudolf Steiner actually answers this question in precisely the place he should have. At the end of his life, he wrote Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts, and the very first phrase of the very first thought begins: "Anthroposophy is...". The only difficulty comes when the next words are translated into English. Perhaps some German speakers here can provide some illumination. In the meantime, I'll parse out the problem as I have come to understand it.

*"Here's the first sentence of Leading Thought #1, in the George and Mary Adams translation: "Anthroposophy is a path of knowledge, to guide the Spiritual in the human being to the Spiritual in the universe." That seemed apparently quite plain in its meaning, until when I was in a discussion group in Fair Oaks, California in 1984, where a German speaker said that the term "knowledge" was not an accurate translation of the the German term *erkenntnis* or *erkennen* (I don't have a German edition of the text, so again someone will have to provide the missing piece). This gentleman went on to say that the problem is that "knowledge" is a kind of passive term, and that many seemed to think the study of Anthroposophy was about study itself (reading Steiner and so forth). However, the term *erkenntnis* (probably spelled wrong by me) refers to something more active inwardly, and he suggested that instead of knowledge the proper English word should be: cognition. Thus: "Anthroposophy is a path of cognition...".*

*"This then brings us to Steiner's epistemological works, *A Theory of Knowledge Implicit in Goethe's World Conception*, and *The Philosophy of Freedom*, for these places are where the new "cognition" is taught.*

"Now from my own reading, observation and thinking, I have put together the following ideas in regard to this.

"Only in the present phase of the evolution of consciousness has the capacity for this "new" cognition arisen in human beings. It is entirely modern in its nature. So, for example, we have Coleridge in England and Emerson in America having an instinctive relationship to this new capacity, which they described as best they could, and which stands behind the "how" of thinking that allows them to express their individual

genius. Yet, it was Steiner who saw the need to first understand it in himself, and this in a way that wove our understanding of this capacity into harmony with the underlying spirit of the age: natural science. So then we get the sub-title to the book PoF: "some results of introspection following the methods of natural science".

"Many people in our society and movement believe that it is Steiner's clairvoyance that is the basis for Anthroposophy. In this they are mistaken. It is only when Steiner takes his spiritual experience into his soul through the mediating lens of the new cognition that we get what he often called: "anthroposophical spiritual science". What makes the content of spiritual science (the books and lectures) "anthroposophical" is the particular act of cognition by which the percepts (the spiritual experiences) are joined to concepts, i.e. the new cognition.

"Further, in Occult Science Steiner made clear that the new cognition (the achievement of the goal of PoF) did not lead directly to clairvoyance, but instead led the thinker to an experience of the world of spirit as a world of thought. He also says in the same paragraphs (end of Chapter Five in Occult Science) that while Knowledge of Higher Worlds can lead to spiritual experience, the path of PoF does this in a way that is more sure and more exact. KHoW leads indirectly through the sense world, but only PoF lead directly through the spiritual world of our own inwardness.

"Another way I see this:

"The Creator gave us the potential for certain capacities through the evolution of consciousness. But we have to will them into manifestation, for it is part of our evolution to develop the necessary inner will forces. The I has to become strengthened (the I is the will), and PoF is the challenge to modern humanity for the development of this special capacity only now available. Were anthroposophists to only teach this (after succeeding in reaching the goal of PoF), we could give nothing more to humanity of any importance. At the same time, like any "science" it really only demonstrates itself in application. We learn the new cognition not for ourselves, but as a service. We need to not only know inwardly PoF, but to apply this new capacity to questions of Life.

"There is a lot more that could (and should) be said, but that takes us off into the realm of an much needed honest assessment of how well the Society and Movement are doing with respect to actually knowing and practicing the new cognition."

Let me now say some more about the significance of *The Philosophy of Freedom* (Spiritual Activity), before we confront Emberson's text.

It is clear from a study of *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, and even more clear from a scientific (objective and empirical) introspective life, that the human being only has knowledge when he is able to unite in his soul both percept (experience) and concept (thought). The mere reading of a Steiner text can in fact never provide knowledge, although this myth is sub-consciously endemic in the Society and Movement. In fact, I recently heard a talk by the head of the Pedagogical Section of the School of Spiritual Science where he said: "*We know through Rudolf Steiner that...*" [emphasis added].

Such a statement can only be made by someone who has not troubled themselves to come to know Steiner's most important work, a condition so common in the Society and Movement that it causes us to fall into error after error in our thinking.

Some years ago I wrote the following essay, which I published on my website (in 1997) and which was later translated into German and published in the *Jahrbuch für anthroposophische Kritik* 1998 at the editor's initiative: *The Study of Rudolf Steiner's Lecture Cycles and the Problem of Cognition: musings on the epistemological swampland of the Anthroposophical Movement*. [<http://ipwebdev.com/hermit/oajnr.html>]

The essential matter can be put this way. Most of Steiner's work is derived from his research into the Spiritual World. He there has had many remarkable experiences, of which I suspect we mostly have no adequate idea. He then rendered these experiences into words, either written or spoken. We then hear them or read them. The question is whether what was knowledge (percept-experience united with concept-thought) can become, through the process of listening or reading, knowledge to us. Clearly it cannot because we lack one half of the necessary elements required for knowledge - the percept-experience. In fact, most of what we read or hear from Steiner would basically have to be called *perceptless concepts* (or thought uncoupled from experience).

This fact does not, by the way, in anyway make Steiner's works any less important, or imply that he did something that seems to have confused us. On the contrary, he is quite clear (for example in *Theosophy* and *Occult Science: an outline*), and has written in the introductions and the beginning materials in those two books over and over again of: understanding. He has remarked more than once that the reports of a researcher into the spiritual has the same value and meaning as the reports of a natural scientist to the neophyte. The natural scientist can also not give us knowledge, but can give us understanding.

Would that this is all there is to the problem.

Understanding, if we read Steiner carefully, has to be earned. We cannot be passive, and must work over consciously the material so provided. In the best case we recreate what he has written (or said) in our souls by this working over, and by consciously

thinking through the underlying logical relations. We meet Steiner half-way as it were, and this enables our soul to acquire a deep understanding of the results of the work of the spiritual researcher. However, because the Society and Movement failed to draw into itself Steiner's works on the problem of knowledge in a healthy way, the boundary between, and the significance of, the difference between knowledge and understanding is unknown to us, such that we have lost the true understanding of the scientific basis underlying Anthroposophy.

Unfortunately, where the reader of the books and lectures is more passive, not even understanding can be achieved, and the material becomes in the soul mere belief. Tragically we encounter this everywhere in the Society and Movement, where we meet many individuals who have substituted for their prior religious views the anthroposophical world-view without any inner activity at all. Anthroposophy has, by this process of passivity, degenerated into something that has to be called: Steinerism; and, when those outside our Movement encounter this attitude of soul they are quite correct to think that we are nothing more than just another religious cult.

Let us look a little more closely at the relevant soul processes so that this difficulty can be more carefully observed.

When I read a text my experience (the percept) is of symbols on a page, nothing more. Through the act of reading (coupled with the skill of the speaker/writer), I arrive at thoughts, but these thoughts are the result of my own mostly sub-conscious activity. The meaning of the symbols on the page is my creation, and the more I sleep through this process, the less likely I am to benefit from it.

A second matter is that this self-generated thought content, once created, roots itself in memory. From this we get the horrible habit in our circles of Steiner said. When we hear this term, we have to realize that the speaker has not been engaged in the act of thinking in the moment (forming intuitions), but has turned in their soul to memory, and from memory drawn out the relevant conceptual content. Now many people have learned to think for themselves to various degrees, and often we will hear this original content expressed in writing or speech, followed by a quote from Steiner. This act of quoting is done, as we know, most often for the sole purpose of suggesting to those listening (or reading) that the speaker/writer's own thought content is verified by the authority of the great initiate (such a use of Steiner's words he over and over again expressly disapproved - we are not to use him as an authority for anything). In effect, it is a kind of secondary thinking flaw in the Society and Movement, which makes us so mistrust our own original thinking, that we seldom can express ourselves without reference to Him (resulting in an sub-conscious deification of Steiner's personality - another attitude that causes others to justly mark us as a cult).

Now original (living) thinking is always with us. We do this far more than we frequently imagine. The problem is that without having engaged in the disciplines of introspection, we generally can't distinguish those thoughts which are original intuitions from those that

arise from mere memory. We constantly have moments of real knowledge, but in the absence of well practiced skills of self observation, we are unable to distinguish such real knowledge from true understanding and these two from mere belief. We sit in circles of conversation with each other, and the ebb and flow of the thought content wanders among these three (knowledge, understanding and belief) without most people quite recognizing just why these conversations make us so uncomfortable and are fundamentally so difficult.

In the absence of both a sound working out of *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, and an equally sound practice of the Reverse Cultus (a whole other story - see appendix below), we are fated to collectively wander in darkness. What is worse is that because we rely excessively on Steiner, and have taken in this myth that he can provide us real knowledge, we do far more harm than good, for the Shadow has an open doorway in most all soul processes that to us are sub-conscious.

This leads us back in the direction of this very flawed book, but let me add one more nuance first.

Steiner often spoke of a particular danger faced by the Society and Movement, which he called: the intellectualization of the Michaelic Cosmic Intelligence.

This is the fundamental tragedy of the Society and Movement as a consequence of the failures of the 20th Century, which failures we still refuse to even acknowledge, much less properly face so that we can learn the quite valuable lessons offered there. We have made into a dead intellectual thought content almost all that Steiner gave of us out of the remarkable offerings to us from the Spiritual Worlds that we were given to understand as the Michaelic Cosmic Intelligence.

When Steiner wrote and spoke, this Intelligence was present in the room. When the concepts entered onto the page they died. If they did not properly enter the hearts of his listeners, they also died. Some among us still remember what it was like, for example, to speak to someone who was actually present at the Christmas Conference. In them lived something quite unusual, because they actually heard it. No more have we this gift within our Society and Movement such that now what we have is a dead on the page thought content entombed in the books, lectures and reports.

Only our own activity can enliven this content, and without our facing that we have such a task, or how poorly we do such a task (to the extent we instinctively understand it), the less and less likely it becomes that we will succeed at this much needed work.

In order to do this, we have to first enliven our own thinking. The place to start such work is actually *A Theory of Knowledge Implicit in Goethe's World Conception*, which Owen Barfield called: "the least read, most important book, Steiner ever wrote". Think of this work as the Overture to the Symphony that is *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*.

There is no better introduction to *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, and there are thoughts to be found through a study of Theory that are quite important for really appreciating the later work.

Theory really introduces us to organic thinking in the best possible way, while the Philosophy takes us from this organic thinking (Goetheanism) to moral or spiritual thinking (Anthroposophy). Once we have the latter gift well in hand, much that remains otherwise invisible now becomes less so.

In any event, turning to the book *From Gondhishapur to Silicon Valley*, we find all the consequences of the failures of the 20th Century, outlined above, on display. Let me first list some general conditions.

One of the matters, which struck me as quite odd when I read this book a year ago, was that here was a book written by a Central European on a matter that is clearly indicated by Steiner to involve soul attributes belonging to Americans. Americans are to develop "mechanical occultism", so what (I asked myself) is a Central European doing trying to explain to the rest of us the meaning of this future unfolding?

I also knew that Emberson clearly knew little about how already the question of mechanical occultism was being handled in America (which state of ignorance is true of most American anthroposophists as well). The main work on mechanical occultism is developing not in Silicon Valley, but on the outer reaches of natural science, where there are those who study the works of Nikola Tesla, John Keely and Walter Russell. The foremost spiritual researcher into this is the American anthroposophical playwright: Martha Keltz. Here is a link to her web pages, which are extraordinarily rich in resources, and while I am not completely in accord with all that she does and thinks, she is far far better at this than Emberson. [<http://www.studioeditions.com/index.html> is the main page] (that site is "down" — articles by Martha Keltz can be found [here](#).) She, at least, speaks from actual spiritual experience.

In addition there is Borderland Sciences, a web page behind which stands work starting all the way back in 1945, and which has been a nexus of the work of many others who are trying to further the research into mechanical occultism, which initially appeared in the world out of activities of Tesla, Keely and Russell. [<https://borderlandsciences.org/>].

There is then in Emberson a kind of presumptive arrogance, which Shadow driven impulse leads him to believe he can penetrate these mysteries, without bothering to actually investigate the land and people whose soul gesture is to foster this work.

Another general aspect of Emberson's book is its almost total reliance on Steiner's indications, which are everywhere treated as the final authority on just about everything. Here we encounter the problem of the undisciplined use of *perceptless concepts on a huge scale*. A perceptless concept is completely ungrounded (luciferic), having become divorced from its concrete and necessary origin - the percept/experience.

Emberson has no experiences himself, but must raise up as a kind a deified authority the work of the great initiate as the ultimate expression of truth. If you read carefully this book, paying particular attention to individual sentences (which in order to represent the truth must be internally logical and coherent from one section of the text to the next), we come upon very large general assertions (Emberson's version of what it all means) broken up by quotes from Steiner. Yes, there are a lot of facts about the history of the development of the computer, but we have to be very careful to examine the conclusions that Emberson reaches in order to see if these are actually justified on the basis of what he actually knows to be true (as against what he believes to be true).

For example, he writes (end of page 129 et. seq):

"One of the most wide-spread delusions of our time is that binary computers were developed by human beings to serve mankind. This is not the case. Binary computers were developed by the ahrimanic double in man, to serve the Sorat and his hosts. Man was but the instrument of the double's activity. Only ahrimanic beings have a comprehensive grasp of what is happening in computer technology. Men are lulled to sleep by visions of knowledge and power."

Now the most curious aspect of such thoughts as these, which are everywhere in this text, is that they are by and large a product of Emberson's own thinking. This is his vision of the truth of matters, albeit spread throughout the text is everything he can find that Steiner ever said that can be *used to support Emberson's fantastic (luciferic) vision*. Clearly Steiner said some disturbing things about such questions as to the future of technology, but in the case of Steiner, whenever he did this in any lecture cycle, he actually walked around the subject matter in a kind of circling spiraling gesture, seeing it from all sides and raising the eventual picture up to a higher level.

Emberson, working out his individualized version of the meaning of what he has read in Steiner (*perceptless concepts*), is here creating conclusions which cannot ultimately be justified because they are so one-sided, so absent the effort to walk around the subject matter and view it from multiple directions. Emberson doesn't have any experience of Sorat, or Sorat's hosts or of the ahrimanic double. All he has is the images and meanings he has created in his own consciousness from reading, which he shows no sign of ever carefully examining.

The fact is that when we produce a thought content, the main ingredient of the character of this thought is the moral intention (quality) that stands behind the inner cognitive activity. This truth becomes known to everyone who succeeds at penetrating to the truths of *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, and in the absence of the necessary self knowledge, the I will inevitably produce errors of thought, because (again) where we ourselves are working out of the sub-conscious the Shadow is given free play. In this case it would seem that Emberson also has an antipathy for this technology (no redemptive concepts of its meaning at all), which sub-conscious and unredeemed antipathy is precisely the soul-soil in which the Shadow can weave confusion.

Lets look at another example of what he has written, where on page 130 he writes of secret brotherhoods and on page 131 of Western occultists. Has he provided any evidence he actually has real knowledge of these groups, or are we here just being exposed to Emberson's mere beliefs. Anyone drinking a lot of coffee can have thoughts. True thoughts are a lot harder to come by. When I read this kind of stuff in Emberson, it made me think more of the worst kind of thinking and writing that comes out of conspiracy buffs, than anything careful, restrained and otherwise disciplined in a scientific manner.

Also on page 130 we find this sentence: "Such computers will physically be semi-living beings." Now that is an interesting idea, but it calls for a great deal more discussion, for everything we can come to understand about life and ethereal processes from Steiner suggests that this may be a great deal more complicated than what Emberson has so far brought out in this fantasy which he has created. Will this semi-living being have an ethereal body, an astral body or an ego? At the edge, where the two (the mechanical and the living) merge, what will happen when the ethereal forces of the cosmic periphery react with the forces of sub-nature? Emberson doesn't seem to have actually critically thought about his thoughts at all (critical self-examination being an essential task of anyone working at spiritual self-development).

On page 131, Emberson follows with a long quote from Steiner about electricity and its relationship to thought, but somehow doesn't seem to notice this phrase in the Steiner quote: "...when one learns to view it from a particular level...". This, something Steiner often expressed, ought to have suggested that only from a certain point of view was the statement true that Emberson is quoting. Yet, Emberson uses it to make his point, without being really able to enlighten us about electricity.

Steiner said a great deal about electricity over his life time, and was often limited in what he could say because his listeners had so little understanding of the necessary background. If we (as modern anthroposophists) want to understand electricity better, then we need to realize that we won't get it from Emberson, but instead should turn to Ernst Lehrs remarkable book *Man or Matter: Introduction to a Spiritual Understanding of Nature on the Basis of Goethe's Method of Training Observation and Thought*. Lehrs has well understood Steiner's *A Theory of Knowledge Implicit in Goethe's World Conception*, and his comments in *Man or Matter* on electricity are not so nearly as one-sided as the views which Emberson seeks to express in order to put forward his fantasy.

Emberson next puts forward a quote that contains this sentence attributed to Steiner: "Either things go on [speaking of the future] chaotically, as industry and technology have done until now, in which case it will lead to whoever has the possession of these things causing havoc, or else it will be cast into the moral mold (sic) of Freemasonry."

Emberson then goes on (his own words, page 133) to suggest, as a further element of his fantasy, man will eventually become "incorporated into the spidery world-machine of artificial intelligence". No doubt the idea of artificial intelligence is common today, with

many actively seeking to create such a device. Here we can see a thought-phenomena, expressed in words, that is representative of much that habitually exists in many people today, not just anthroposophists. This is properly called: the loose association.

For example, the two terms artificial and intelligence may not actually be able to mean anything true. Steiner frequently pointed out to us that phrases in conventional frames of reference frequently did not reveal a truth. On the contrary, they often led to, or were born out of, illusions. Emberson by bringing into contact with each other (something done throughout the book, not just here) the regular world terminology "artificial intelligence" and "the spidery world-machine" seeks to bring forward a strong mental picture for the reader. But the important question is whether the language used actually leads to the truth, or to further illusion.

When, in the soul, two or more ideas are brought into contact with each other, introspection reveals certain representative phenomena. They can repel each other, or they can harmonize. They can be forced together, or grown together. A lot depends not just on the meaning of terms, but the over-idea the thinking seeks to express. Words on a page are only a part of what is involved. The real idea hovers over the page, and we can lose ourselves in this fantasy if we do not adequately pay attention to the ideas being woven by these words.

Some such arrangements of concepts will be entirely ungrounded and fantastic (that is luciferic). Others so concrete and rigid as to be fully materialized (ahrimanic). It takes a certain amount of inner quality of soul to bring such concepts into contact (association) with each other, such that they give birth to a new thought. Many people have a good instinct for this, for their motives in bringing the ideas into contact with each other have a certain purity (selflessness) of soul. The moral nature (conscious or instinctive) of the thinking gesture enables the concepts to harmonize in their meaning.

Steiner points in this direction when he describes, in the Challenge of the Times, that English speakers are instinctively in the Consciousness Soul in their Life of Rights. He says (in the same lecture), that Central Europeans have to be trained to the Consciousness Soul. This requires of us that we ask whether Emberson, who already has demonstrated he is not on familiar or practical terms with Steiner's works on the science of knowing, is even awake in the Consciousness Soul.

How would we know this?

The nature of the Consciousness Soul is such that it does not out of its will seek to overwhelm the thinking of the other - the Thou. This service (washing the feet of the reader) gesture is frequently found in many works on Goethean Science (which Emberson's book clearly is not), in that the writer of such works provides only descriptions, and then out of these descriptions draws forward for the reader their logical consequences in a clear and transparent fashion.

It is the Intellectual Soul that wants to make arguments, and convince, and in doing so finds it cannot really rest on its own original thought, but needing to rely on authority must constantly make footnotes (which is why Prokofieff, for example, writes such long footnoted books). The Consciousness Soul merely wants to present facts, which it has itself already rendered into real knowledge, and which it then puts forward in service to the true understanding of the reader, never requiring of the reader a blind obedience to any other authority than the readers own mind (a book written in the absence of this inner gesture, will often lead the reader in the direction of a descent into mere belief). The real matter Emberson seems to require of the readers his book is that he be believed, thus the many quotes seeking support in Steiner, such that the whole structure becomes sub-consciously designed to entrap us in his fantasy.

Spiritual movements, such as those connected to Anthroposophy, following on the crossing over of the founder, tend to decay almost at once. The practices taught are not followed, and the work that is produced later by the students frequently becomes a mere commentary of what the guru had once said. Many anthroposophists march into the future, walking backwards, their eyes never leaving the overly-revered thoughts of the great teacher. Often the result of such missteps is that the Shadow forces are able to work destructively from within, while the group involved, vainly assuming its dependent on authority purity, believes falsely that all opposition comes only from without (in spite of what we all know to be true - that we are always our own worst enemies).

Emberson, trapped in an anthroposophical culture gone to sleep as regards its real treasures, is merely an archetype for much similar work. Yet, we have to ask ourselves whether any other purpose is served by his work. If much in it is fantasy, and rooted in Emberson's own sub-conscious and undisciplined soul life, who benefits by the erroneous pictures thus created? Keep in mind that the problem is not that there are no facts and no truth present, but that the mixture of illusion and lie makes the whole essentially useless. A half truth is not truth at all. We can start to get an answer to this by returning to the text at page 140:

"The overwhelming spread of binary computer technology, which did not yet exist in Rudolf Steiner's time, has been the most influential factor paving the way for the incarnation of Ahriman in that mighty Aspect of his cosmic being which we call the Sorat, the Binary Beast. Indeed, we may say this incarnation of Ahriman is the incarnation of the Binary Beast."

For me there were two ways to read this. One was that Ahriman was going to incarnate in the artificial intelligence of the spidery-world - that is Ahriman's body would be some kind of hybrid of semi-living flesh and technology - Ahriman as a cyborg (or Borg - see Star Trek). The other idea is that Ahriman is himself in his nature the Binary Beast, and will incarnate as such. Such is Emberson's fantastical inner pictures, which themselves are actually quite unclear (lacking the necessary disciplines), that we can't quite be sure what he (Emberson) means here. In a very real sense, Emberson has actually helped the

Incarnation of Ahriman, by sowing the seeds of an incredible confusion and misdirection into the Society and Movement through the production of this work with so few elements of conscious (self aware) thinking activity. Those who read this book might very well end up looking for Ahriman in the wrong place and perhaps the wrong time. (Emberson is not alone in this. Such confusion and misdirection has crept in everywhere in so-called anthroposophical literature.)

This is all the more odd, because on the page before, Emberson quoted Steiner as follows (page 139):

"...before even a part of the third millennium of the post Christian era has elapsed, there will be, in the West, an actual incarnation of Ahriman: Ahriman in the flesh."

If we actually read this sentence carefully, Ahriman is already incarnated (...before even a part of the third millennium...)! Ahriman is with us now. Nor will he be a machine (for such machines as Emberson fantasizes don't yet exist). In fact, he will (if Steiner's indications are true), have an outer world name: **"The thing that will matter, though, will be for people in the age of Ahriman to know that John William Smith [1] is only what appears before them outwardly, and that inwardly Ahriman is there; they must know what is happening and not succumb to any deception in the drowsiness of their illusions."** R.S. 28 December 1919. [emphasis added] [1: a name Steiner made up merely to make the point]

If the reader of this essay wants to explore an alternative set of conceptions to Emberson's regarding the place and significance of Ahriman's incarnation, they are invited to go to my website and read the on-line version of my forthcoming book: American Anthroposophy, where the first essay concerns Ahriman's incarnation. The only caution is that this is a work in process, and the reason I direct people's attention to it today is my desire for fruitful dialog as part of the path by which this work becomes further developed. [<http://ipwebdev.com/hermit/otlwa.html>] Anyone who wishes to comment can reach me at hermit@tiac.net.

As a final comment, I should note that one of the main elements of one-sidedness in Emberson's book is that he seems to believe that Christ and the Divine Mother are sitting this one out on the sidelines, leaving to the evil demonic beings the whole field of play in which the future of humanity is to unfold. This is so patently untrue, and is all the more strange, given that at least as regards the Christ, Steiner (the great authority) placed the Mystery of Golgatha (and its aftermath) as the main redeeming gesture in human affairs. One really has to look down (from a superior moral assumption?) on the rest of humanity, in order to believe that all the worst is on the horizon.

Again and again Emberson sees his fellow human beings as fools (Men are lulled to sleep by visions of knowledge and power). This is so untrue, and can only represent the thinking of someone who has not yet been able to understand the very first step of true

moral activity (washing the feet). Here is an example of the danger concerning which Steiner frequently warned us. At the beginning of the path of self development, the gravest danger is an excess of egotism.

To know how false is Emberson's idea of human beings being driven completely forward in this technology by its own secret nature, one only has to look at the Open Source community to experience the moral power that puts this tool to use in countless wise ways. The whole of Civil Society also uses this tool to bring step by hard step more and more moral sanity into the world. Everywhere one looks at how human beings apply the computer to the needs of their lives, its aid as a source of social and spiritual health is obvious.

Emberson, knowing the tool idea is counter to his thesis, wishes to argue it away. He does this in two ways. First by declaring that only the ahrimanic double understands the true nature of computers. If this is true, how then does Emberson understand them in the way he proposes? What efforts of soul activity has enabled him to rise above the rest of stupid and foolish humanity to come to this more pure vision?

The second way is to rely on Steiner, borrowing from him a comment that one needs to be discerning, and not always use the tools of technology. Again Emberson knows what the rest of us should do here - be afraid of the boogieman in your computer!

Most software writers and the technical savants who create the physical aspects of this tool, could read Emberson and come to feel that he has so dismissed and devalued their life of struggles and moral efforts to make something that helps humanity, that this would come as a great blow to their souls. The devil runs their work, Emberson is saying, and those who strive here are themselves the tool of something they don't understand. What a terrible and unjustified judgment to place on another human being.

Emberson also thinks we should know that electricity is the same as human thought. At the same time, he demonstrates that he has himself not entered into the mysteries of electricity fully on his own effort (no familiarity with Goethean thinking on this subject - although Lehrs book has been in existence since 1951). We are all fools it would seem, while Emberson's beliefs in the superior authority of Steiner leads him (Emberson) only to the vision of the grave danger that confronts the rest of us.

All the same, Emberson exhibits a problem which Lehrs saw natural science already trapped within. Lehrs writes that in following the path of questions that arose from its encounter with electricity and magnetism, humanity has entered "a country that is not ours". Human thought, according to Lehrs, has descended in the direction of sub-nature, and become lost there. Yet, Lehrs also knows that this is something that had to happen, and further that a fully developed Goetheanism and Anthroposophy can lead the way out.

Emerson himself has become trapped in a train of thought that sought to become too close to evil. Tomberg, in his *Meditations on the Tarot*, explains how it is dangerous to too closely contemplate evil, for to meditate on evil leads in the direction such that a communion with evil becomes possible. The soul that draws too near to evil (is not objective enough, standing back as it were at a distance) sacrifices its vital elan` - its life forces.

Rudolf Steiner was not unaware of this problem. In the last sentence of his original preface to *The Philosophy of Freedom* (written in 1894, revised in 1918), he writes: "One must be able to confront an idea and experience it; otherwise one will fall into its bondage." The real freedom Steiner was teaching in this book is about inner freedom. The natural scientist following electrical phenomena, unknowing into the realm of sub-nature is not free. An anthroposophist, too contemplative of evil is also not free. Each is in bondage to the idea, and even Steiner's anthroposophical world-view can be such an idea to an I that lives far too asleep as to the real processes of its own mind (becoming ultimately a mere true believer in Steinerism).

In the wonderful lecture Dennis Klocek gave at the 2005 AGM, on the alchemical path underlying anthroposophy, he spoke of the mandala of exercises of which the Air Trial involved the letting go or unwinding of thoughts (this can be found published in the Newsletter). I wrote an essay out of the relationship of the discipleship path to the same mandala, although this essay focused not on the alchemical-Rosicrucian exercises, but on moral development (In Joyous Celebration of the Soul Art and Music of Discipleship - <http://ipwebdev.com/hermit/samod/html>) in accord with Steiner's admonition in *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* about our needing to take three steps in character development, for each single step in spiritual development. In my essay this problem of the Air Trial is seen as one of renunciation - the sacrifice of thoughts.

It is the capacity to let go our thoughts, to surrender them, that makes us free in the soul from the potential bondage ideas represent. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Would that Emerson had had the understanding of the necessity of sacrificing his thoughts, as a necessary part of discovering the truth. My own experience after many (35) years practice, is that the sacrifice of thoughts always leads one further toward the truth. If we do not surrender at various stages our strongly held mental pictures, we end up in bondage to them. Yet, in the very act of surrender, renunciation and sacrifice the I becomes free of its own mental past, such that the soul become a chalice into which the wind (the spirit) can pour new insight in accord with our own slowly developing character.

It is *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*, however, where the path of true moral development is laid out in the discussions on moral imagination, moral intuition and moral technique. These need ultimately to be practiced and not just be theories. That the Movement and Society hardly recognize these facts is the cause of all the flaws in our work for which Emerson's book is an archetype.

It will seem to some that this is overly harsh, but it is not. The unfortunate reality is that the Society and Movement are tragically wandering in darkness, and themselves asleep to far too much. I take no pleasure in pointing this out, but rather my soul lives in great pain whenever I read the spiritual junk-food in far too much anthroposophical writing or hear the same spiritual junk-food speeches of far too many anthroposophists. I'd much prefer matters to be better all around, and for the Society and Movement to be actually nourishing itself and humanity through being living examples of Steiner's greatest gifts. But we are not, and we are not to such a degree that we are on the verge of turning our work into the gravest enemy of Anthroposophy itself.

If we do not take ourselves in hand, then our deeds will bring it about that Steiner's gift of *The Philosophy of Freedom* (spiritual activity) and the Reverse Cultus will not come to the aid of humanity during this time of great crisis. These gifts could well disappear from view in the next few decades if not practiced, and only a far later age will find out that tragically at one time the path to spiritual experience was known to a small few as a science for a time, but then forgotten. ("Anthroposophy is a path of cognition from the Spiritual in the human being to the Spiritual in the universe.")

As an addendum, this essay ends with an Imagination of the Reverse Cultus, based upon experience and a careful reading of Rudolf Steiner's instructions regarding the same as presented in the Sixth Lecture of *Awakening to Community*.

The Circle gathers, with one shared intention - to consciously work with the spirit. No member of the Circle is more important than any other member. First in silence they recall what Steiner taught about why Judas had to kiss Christ. The truth at that time in Palestine was that when crowds gathered to hear teaching, the teaching came from all those in the circle around Christ. The Christ spirit spoke through all, first one and then another. For this reason Judas had to kiss the One who was the center, otherwise the Centurions would not know whom to arrest.

After this mood is engendered, in which each recognizes in the other a true source of spirit presence, the members of the group begin to speak. What they offer is not a pre-thought theme, about which one may be more expert than another, but rather the simple feelings of their hearts in the moment. These heart-felt concerns are the sharing to each other that opens the hearts to each other. The Circle meets each other in this art of coming to know each others deepest concerns, which can (and often will) be entirely personal. This knowing of each other is a great gift to give and to receive.

In this brief sharing will begin to emerge the spirit music latent in the coming conversation, for the co-participating spirit presence knows the truth of our hearts, and is drawn to these concerns out of the darkness represented by the Threshold and into the light and warmth of the sharing. Thus, in acknowledging each other in silence as also true speakers of the spirit, and then in sharing the true matters of the heart as exists for each at that moment in time, the Chalice is born in the Ethereal - in the mutually shared world of thought.

Now comes the Art of Conversation, the Royal Art.

Here too no one is better than another for as Christ is quoted in the John Gospel: "What's born of the flesh is flesh, and what's born of the breath is breath. Don't be amazed because I told you you have to be born again. The wind blows where it will and you hear the sound of it, but you don't know where it comes from or where it goes; it's the same with everyone born of the breath".

The breath of spirit blows where It wills, not where we will It.

The Royal Art is deep indeed and begins (as Tomberg expressed it) by learning to think on our knees. At the same time, these inner skills of thinking and listening will have little effect on where the wind blows, and while the study of The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity may make us individually more awake inwardly, the will of the spirit presence in the conversation belongs to that spirit presence, not to us.

So the conversation proceeds in the heart-warmed Chalice of the shared experience of the world of thoughts. Each contributes what is thought in them. Together a weaving of a whole is sought, but no one can judge whether anyone else's contribution is a needed thread or not. Often, for example, something, which on the surface seems antagonistic or oppositional, is precisely what is needed in the moment to stimulate another in the offering of their part of the whole.

It is possible then for this circling weaving conversation to rise, in the nature and the substance of its overall meaning, nearer and nearer to spiritual other-presence. It will not do, however, to believe that as the conversation of the members of the group draws near this other-presence, that It will tell us what is true and good. That would violate our freedom. The true touch of the wind in the soul is otherwise in its nature.

In each soul lie latent embers of spirit recollection, spirit mindfulness and spirit vision. We are already as thinking spirits, in the spiritual worlds. What is fostered in the Chalice is something rooted in the teaching of Christ: Wherever two or more are gathered in my name, there I am.

He is with us.

Moreover, He is very interested in what we choose to think, not in our obedience to Him. Our obedience we owe to our higher self, not to Him - that is to the Not I, but Christ in me. He loves everyone in the Circle equally, and observing the latent embers of recollection, mindfulness and vision within each separate soul, He aids our communion by breathing on these embers. He gives to each, according to that individual need, that aspect of His Life which is His Breath - what John the Baptist in Matthew 3:11 called holy breath. ["Now I bathe you in the water to change hearts, but the one coming after me is stronger than me: I'm not big enough to carry his shoes. He will bathe you in holy breath and fire."]

With His Breath, during the communion that is the conversation in the Chalice, the latent embers of our own soul are given Life. Within the thoughts of each arise that which belongs to each, but which is also seen by the Love of Christ, and enthused with His Life. We rise on the quality of our will in recognizing the spirit presence in each other, and in the sharing of the concerns of our hearts; and, as we do this, the weaving of the thoughts into a whole - still resting on our own insight and will - is given Eternal Life, in the form of the good and the true.

Thus revealing the truth that: "I am with you every day, until the culmination of time".
Matthew 28:20

A few final words.

It is clear to anyone that reads this and takes it to heart, that while The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity may be necessary, it will still be some time before enough people practice it to make a difference. This is true, yet at the same time it is quite possible to understand the import of this book on the ideas we have about knowledge, and from this understanding begin to discipline our activities, and moderate the excesses now endemic in our work.

You don't have to master the Philosophy to begin to ask yourself whether you have real knowledge of something, or just true understanding, or only mere belief. This moral inventory can lead easily to a more modest (moderate) writing and speaking in all of us. Most especially, however, it is the Reverse Cultus that can begin to save our work.

This we all can do, for it requires only the recognition of each individual's spirit reality, and the discipline to form conversations not on the basis of expertise on grand and glorious themes, but instead on the simple present in the moment expressions of each individual heart. Such a circle, where no one can anymore assert a mastery of Steiner said, and proclaim (as many do) their vain beliefs as absolute truths, begins the necessary healing. We form the chalice out of a recognition of each other as just as significant as the other, for the circle is a social gesture. Then by opening our hearts to each other, we bring such human warmth that all the potential luciferic vanity and cold ahrimanic intellectualism so common today is banished.

Being a spiritual scientist is in practice a lot easier than it seems. We just have to stop trying to be mini-steiners, and move forward just being ourselves. Human, ignorant, unfinished, troubled, and hungry for spiritual community. In such a circle our very best Friend will have no trouble at all coming to visit us every time we meet.



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