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Relationship to Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy

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# Meditation and Anthroposophy - What is the Connection?

## Part 2: The Spiritual Foundations of "Anthroposophical Meditation"<sup>1</sup> and Their Relationship to the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner

### Personal Foreword

The first part of this essay<sup>2</sup>, published in March, 2018, and the subsequent open letters between Anna-Katharina Dehmelt and myself<sup>3</sup>, have met with a surprisingly large response. I received grateful feedback in which readers expressed their own further thoughts as well. Obviously, the question of the nature of the movement that calls itself "Anthroposophical Meditation" has become their own question for many people, and it is therefore a deep concern of mine to continue working on this topic as far as should prove necessary.

In this debate, however, I myself also came into an inner struggle that was inflamed by the desire to understand what was present here. I went through various stages of my search; always new elements and characteristics opened up for me that gradually transformed the overall picture, and so I was once again able to learn that an extremely important cognitive process for me – also personally – was ignited by a phenomenon that made me feel that I could not agree with it. As so often in my life, I have learned the paths I have identified as wrong can become immensely important to my own development.

Apart from this, it is important in dealing with "Anthroposophical Meditation" that what is fundamentally new, which has become possible with the appearance of Rudolf Steiner in humanity's history, becomes quite definitely clear. To begin with, this until now hardly perceived and definitely 'new' in humanity has asserted itself as a feeling, but this feeling can only point the seeker in a direction; it cannot yet feel what has entered the world as the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner. This is why it is important that in a first step Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy is, as it were, mistaken for something familiar to humanity. This is the most important reason for the emergence and especially for the success of the so-called "Anthroposophical Meditation." Here Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy is adapted to such an extent that one encounters something known and familiar, something that one already possesses, has mastered and only has to apply. So that Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy – the fundamental turning point in humanity – can be seen and can develop itself within us, however, it is important to initiate a fundamental process of inner transformation.

In a 1917 and 1918 essay on "The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz" Rudolf Steiner explains:

*"In the grand context of the universe, deception is a necessity. (...) If deception were not in the background of our human world experience, then human beings could not develop the different stages of their consciousness. For deception is the driving force of this evolution of consciousness."*<sup>4</sup>

It is because of deception, error and the lie that the new organ of perception appropriate to Anthroposophy begins to awaken. It is here – trained through the work on the texts of Rudolf Steiner – that a field of activity is found on which it can take hold of itself. This is why the many erroneous paths we must follow, and which are lamented by so many, are an integral part of our development. This has another consequence, however. This is that we can and should be grateful to those who enabled us to make such an advance in knowledge, and indeed, I feel such gratitude to all those who have made this advance in knowledge possible.

Yet with this work I would like to show quite a bit more than just the wrong path of "Anthroposophical Meditation." At the same time, I would like to refer to the crucial questions, as well as ignite them in the reader, that today can place the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner before those who are truly searching.

### **Recourse to the Past: Theosophy as a Vision of the Future?**

On May 1, 2015, the second "Meditation Research Colloquium" on "Imagination and Inspiration – Differences and Transitions"<sup>5</sup> took place at the Rudolf Steiner House in Stuttgart at which Andreas Neider gave a lecture on the "West-East Contrast and the Necessity of Leading Together Imagination and Inspiration". Andreas Neider worked for a long time at the publishing house *Freies Geistesleben* (Independent Spiritual Life) in Stuttgart, from 2005 to 2015 as the editor responsible for "**Mitteilungen aus dem Anthroposophischen Arbeit in Deutschland**" (Communications about the Anthroposophical Work in Germany), and was one of the founders of the AKANTHOS Akademie in 2015<sup>6</sup>. Thus, he can be taken as one of the significant authors, teachers and co-creators of the spiritual movement today designated as "Anthroposophy"; and thus his lecture held in May, 2015, on 'Imagination and Inspiration', which apart from that also appeared as an article in the magazine "**Die Drei**" (The Three)<sup>7</sup>, was just as much symptomatic as trend-setting for the development of so-called "Anthroposophical Meditation".

The lecture is based on two basic ideas that Andreas Neider put at the beginning without explaining or developing them:

1. The threshold between the physical-sensory and the spiritual world is not to be found, as Rudolf Steiner presents it, between ordinary and higher consciousness, rather between the two stages of knowledge of higher consciousness that Rudolf Steiner calls "imagination" and "inspiration".
2. The difference between the imagination that belongs to normal consciousness and inspiration, the first stage of supersensible consciousness, is connected with the difference between Western and Eastern spirituality. While the "*outward directed perceptual exercises*" of imagination, which are based on thinking, correspond more to the Western disposition, the "*inward directed exercises*" of inspiration, which emanate from a feeling, belong more to the Eastern.<sup>9</sup> In order to overcome the "one-sidedness of imagination"<sup>10</sup>, i.e. the one-sidedness of the Western path of training, Rudolf Steiner added the inspiration embedded in the East to imagination.

It is significant that neither the lecture nor the article, which appeared in "Die Drei" on the basis of the lecture, triggered a discussion about these assumptions; it appears these were accepted without protests by both his listeners as well as his readers.<sup>11</sup>

With his explanations, Neider wants to refer to the fundamental, decisive superiority of Eastern spirituality as against Western, as well as of feeling as against thinking. For according to A. Neider, a higher consciousness can only be attained with the help of the feeling cultivated by Eastern spirituality, for that thinking is not sufficient, because it cannot lead across the threshold to the spiritual world.

Neider asks about the cause of what he considers the one-sided development of Anthroposophy. With regard to the historical events surrounding the former Secretary General of the Theosophical Society, Annie Besant, and the Hindu child Krishnamurti<sup>12</sup>, whom she designated as the future Messiah, he asks:

*"So why did the cultivation of inspiration, i.e. of feeling, fall short in the further development of Anthroposophy? One could also ask it a different way: Why did the starting point of the Anthroposophical Society in 1912/13 consist of a split into a western half, from which the eastern one withdrew in confused behavior, even though Steiner put so much emphasis on the development of both Western-oriented imagination and Eastern-inspired inspiration? Did not this division necessarily lead to a putting aside of the association in the Western sense?"<sup>13</sup>*

And he answers his question like this:

*"Due to the now historically understandable division of the Theosophical Society, Rudolf Steiner's original concern for a connection of Western with Eastern esotericism on the basis of a renewal of both currents in a form appropriate to our time was lost. On the 'Western side' the work on the 'Pillar of Knowledge' was further developed by means of the training of thinking and imagination, but not on the 'Eastern side', that on the 'Pillar of Life', which is absolutely necessary for the formation of a true center."<sup>14</sup>*

The separation of the Theosophical and the Anthroposophical Society must therefore be, according to Neider, done away with today, indeed, through the fact that one establishes "a connection of imagination with inspiration."<sup>15</sup> And now he turns in detail to what he speaks of as "inspiration". The most important element for him here is that with inspiration "*polar to imagination, the individual forces of thinking need not be further strengthened rather have to be completely withdrawn, indeed extinguished.*"<sup>16</sup> Yet this means that – in the transition from imagination to inspiration – another transition could take place: the one from I to Not-I. Neider further explains that the descriptions of Rudolf Steiner were similar to the Buddhistic Anatman ones, for "*all true spirituality*" would be similar to the Buddhistic experience of the "Not-I."<sup>17</sup>

The rejection by Anthroposophists of the Eastern path, Neider continues, therefore rests on the fact that they are afraid of the crossing of the threshold associated with it. So now it is a matter of finally encountering Buddhism "*at eye level*" in order to let oneself be enriched by it. He ends his lecture with a reference to the February, 2016, Second Conference on Meditation under the title "Meditation in East and West – I and Not-I."<sup>18</sup>

### **The Attraction of the Eastern Path**

For Andreas Neider, the separation of the Anthroposophical from the Theosophical Society in 1912/13 was a mistake. This is why things have come to a one-sided development of Anthroposophy, for while the influence of Eastern esotericism has been missing, one has been stuck in front of the "Threshold" within imaginative consciousness, instead of risking the crossing of the Threshold that is connected with the Eastern disposition to "inspiration". Therefore, it is now necessary to do away with the separation that took place under Rudolf Steiner and to reconnect with Eastern spirituality. In order to reach the next stage in the practice of inspiration, which begins with feeling and not with thinking, one must not strengthen the powers of thinking further *rather erase them*.

The appeal of Andreas Neider to enter into a connection with Eastern spirituality for the freeing of Anthroposophy from the one-sidedness attached to it, so that one could be stimulated by it for a next step higher, corresponds to his own path.<sup>19</sup> It is obvious that for him, his work with the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner, as he has taken it up, had reached a less than satisfactory endpoint; his ideas of crossing the threshold and the higher knowledge connected with it were not fulfilled on the basis of that work. He himself gives the reason for this as the too strong intellectuality of a one-sidedly carried out Anthroposophical formulation.<sup>20</sup> This knowledge, however, he did not make into the starting point for new, more in-depth questions (that would have been a very interesting possibility), rather instead he turned to a form of meditation that calls itself Buddhistic. It is obvious that only from this point of view could he have such experiences that corresponded so well to his ideas of the "threshold to the spiritual world", of "I" and "Not-I", of "imagination" and "inspiration" that he could also speak about it in a new way.<sup>21</sup>

Yet Neider is not the only one who has taken such a path; Anna-Katharina Dehmelt experienced something similar, describing her own path of development in an article that appeared in 2012.<sup>22</sup> – One more thing in advance: I am in no way concerned with a dispute that would somehow apply to the personalities of Andreas Neider and Anna-Katharina Dehmelt, among others. The publications and interviews, especially of the latter, however, are of an unusual openness and frankness; Anna-Katharina Dehmelt would like to give an account of her path. This quality of her approach makes it possible for me to work out and show what is essential. Many others do something similar to these two, but they do not speak or write so openly and in detail about it. It is only in this sense that I want my engagement with her texts to be understood.

In her 2012 article "On Living Thinking and Empty Consciousness", Anna-Katharina Dehmelt reported the following: As a young person she deliberately turned her back on Eastern spirituality because of two books circulating in Anthroposophical circles. Her path led her to

begin with from a thinking "*carrying out together with him*" of the texts of Rudolf Steiner to the Rosicrucian Meditation given by him in "Occult Science – An Outline".<sup>23</sup> After initially experiencing success in the development of imagination and inspiration, the comment of a friend became a decisive event. With regard to the following stage, that of intuition, he had explained: "*And then the whole thing has to at least go through an instantaneous moment of empty consciousness.*"<sup>24</sup> Dehmelt describes her situation at the time as follows:

*"That hit me, because I could not do that. I knew that Steiner's third, intuitive level of meditation was not only to throw off the content of the imagination, but also to release the inwardly felt soul activity, to let it disappear from consciousness, and I had tried that again and again – completely unsuccessfully."* With every new attempt, she simply "*flopped back*" into ordinary consciousness.<sup>25</sup>

She describes further on:

*"Obviously I was not ready for intuition yet. I was quite willing to continue the exercises for imagination and inspiration – and yet I increasingly experienced myself standing at a boundary. I had followed Steiner's instructions for many years and still did, had practiced with perseverance the main and auxiliary exercises, had understood what it was all about, had otherwise studied a great deal and devoted myself to the Anthroposophical cause. And now I was stuck."*<sup>26</sup>

Characteristic of her fundamental approach is her reaction in the face of this helplessness:

*"It took the encounter with people who practiced Eastern meditation and yet who through that had lost neither their I nor their clear thinking nor their enlightened contemporaneity. (...) Certainly it could have also been Zen Buddhism on which I had hung up, or any of the many varieties of Hinduistic or perhaps even Buddhistic influenced meditations; but it was then the meditation instructions of Andrew Cohen that stood in the tradition of Advaita Vedanta by Ramana Maharshi, which renounced any anchor such as breath, image or mantra, that I followed (...)." <sup>27</sup>*

For Anna-Katharina Dehmelt, what Andreas Neider only indirectly described now seems immediate: The striving with the exercises given by Rudolf Steiner that had initially (apparently) successfully developed, encounters resistance; the further path cannot be found. A sort of powerlessness comes about that is understood as defeat and that she wants to avoid. This is why she turns away from the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner and seeks the continuation of her path where she can find something to "hang on to." But what does she hang on to? On such "instructions" as she can understand and that she can immediately implement. The "instructions" of Rudolf Steiner, on the other hand, she did not, she confesses, understand, but she could understand and implement the meditation instruction given by Andrew Cohen, which demand the following: "Be still, relax, pay attention and assume no relationship to anything that arises." In her own language that sounds like this:

*"For the physical body: be quiet, motionless, outwardly and inwardly mute. For the etheric body: relax. For the astral body: stay awake. For the I: make no relation to anything, no matter what arises in your consciousness."*<sup>28</sup>

On the basis of the meditations that she then begins, the expected breakthrough finally takes place: Anna-Katharina Dehmelt tells how she experiences the "threshold". Together with that she experiences the "Ground of Being (English original-tr.)", Andrew Cohen's "Ground of Existence (German original-tr.)". Cohen is considered the "pioneer of an evolutionary spirituality" and is known through his book **Evolutionary Enlightenment – A New Path to Spiritual Awakening** which closely follows the integral theory and practice of Ken Wilber, with whom he worked closely.<sup>29</sup>

## The Failure

Dehmelt describes a path that starts with Anthroposophy but then "runs out" into another stream, because the path further cannot be found within Anthroposophy. Since the appearance of Georg Kühlewind<sup>30</sup>, such developments are widespread. Again and again one can read about the fact, as recently in an interview in "Info3", that was drawn out by Jörg Heinlein, who – in order to come to a satisfactory result for himself – wants to combine Zen Buddhism and Anthroposophy. He explains:

*"Yet most Anthroposophists have a desire to go deeper, and from Steiner we have a great number of suggestions on how to get started. Nevertheless, these suggestions somehow pass us by. We have difficulty coming into a practice beyond that of reading. And so unfortunately: Among us Anthroposophists there is not enough practice. For what reason? Rudolf Steiner explained everything to us so beautifully. We already believe we know everything. He explains exactly how 3 plus 3 equals 6. But he never asks us how much is 2 plus 2. And that is where we are failing. (...) With Zen, we are not told anything. We are brought into a situation that is physically difficult and mentally completely unstructured. We have to see for ourselves how we are to handle it. This is the perfect complement to Anthroposophy."*<sup>31</sup>

Heinlein expresses what it is we have to do: about the failure in Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy.

Such a failure does take place; yes, it even has to take place. For the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner belongs to the future of human development; in many ways it exceeds the capabilities of today's human being. Yet it is possible to align oneself with it for one's own future development, and in this sense it can also become the undetermined element of the present.

However, the not-yet-reachable nature of Anthroposophy, which everyone who turns towards it at least has a presentiment of, is often covered over, denied or circumvented. Because how am I to deal with it? Can I admit to myself my lack of ability, my powerlessness, which shows itself in the face of the greatness and unattainability of what I encounter here? And

besides, is it not common practice in Anthroposophical branches and study groups that the "non-knowers" ask, but the "knowers" always have an answer? So that a non-understanding and a questioning are taken as a sign of little advancement in development, which needs to be overcome? While those who have no questions at all, since they already know and understand everything, are considered the better ones, the teachers of the former?

This is how a certain number of Anthroposophists behave. For some time, however, another group is increasingly coming to the fore. It is those who perceive their failure in Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy and make it a subject of discussion. Indeed, they take their not-getting-further as a reason for turning away from Anthroposophy in order to "complement" and "complete" it by means of another stream. Let us take a closer look at Jörg Heinlein's statements from this point of view: He expects Rudolf Steiner to ask us "*how much is 2 plus 2*". Since he does not do that, however, he feels he has been left alone, that is to say, he cannot answer this question himself. Yet does Rudolf Steiner in fact make it impossible for us to also develop and ask our own questions? And, in order then to be able to act independently, do we need a situation "*that is physically difficult and mentally completely unstructured*"?

Heinlein's experiences seem to be characteristic for this group, for even Anna-Katharina Dehmelt, in view of her failure, cannot find any further questions of her own that arise from Anthroposophy; she, too, seeks out such a "chaos creating" situation as is offered to her in the meditation instructions of Andrew Cohen. There she can – just like Heinlein – finally do something herself and try something herself, and that, namely, through the fact that she, just like Heinlein, falls back on what she already likes to do. A failure on this path is no longer possible; because exactly that always appears which is already there, there is on such a path only one possibility: that of success. The transformation of the whole human being, which is what Rudolf Steiner is concerned with, is bypassed at the point where she could have begun.

*"Whoever wants to avoid God falls into his own hands; for there are two things in question: the universal spirit, which is God, and one's own spirit; the latter escapes and flees to the universal spirit; for whoever transcends their own spirit, says to themselves that that is a nothingness and connects everything to God; but whoever avoids God removes this original foundation and makes themselves into the foundation of everything that happens",*

said Philo, cited by Rudolf Steiner in **Christianity as a Mystical Fact**.<sup>32</sup> For there is another way of dealing with failure than the two characterized up till now. It is possible to want to transcend "*our own spirit*" and to make Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophical experience of powerlessness into the starting point for further development within it.

### **The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz and the Necessity of Powerlessness**

In the years 1917/18 Rudolf Steiner published an essay on "The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz", in which he made clear the path made possible by Anthroposophy on the basis of the "Chymical Wedding".<sup>33</sup> Here, only one element of this seven-day path will be singled out: that of the powerlessness that Rosenkreutz deliberately exposed himself to. From

the beginning, Christian Rosenkreutz was one of the quietest and – in the eyes of the others – most unworthy of the aspirants for the "Chymical Wedding" who had reached the castle where the wedding was to take place; he was showered with ridicule and contempt.<sup>34</sup> While many of the guests loudly talked about what they were capable of "seeing" and "hearing" – thus the ideas of Plato, the invisible servants, certain facial images and dreams as well as the "murmuring of the heavens"<sup>35</sup> – he had to again and again admit that he himself could not see and hear anything. Christian Rosenkreutz of course knew that they saw as little as he:

*"But I liked that best, that all those I was attached to were quiet in their actions and did not shout aloud, rather (modestly) considered themselves ignorant people who thought little of themselves but highly of nature."*<sup>36</sup>

At the end of the second day, the weighing of the participants was announced for the following morning; those found too light would then have to leave the castle again under shame and dishonor. That is why they should decide now, the night before, where they want to spend the night. Those who were sure enough of themselves and of their success in the weighing could visit the prepared rooms in order to have a good and quiet night there, but the others, who did not consider themselves worthy, should better remain in the hall and spend the night on the ground. These could then leave the castle unscathed again the next morning.

Because his "*conscience*" convinced him of all his "*ignorance*" and "*unworthiness*", Rosenkreutz decided to stay in the hall.<sup>37</sup> Not only did he sleep in the dark on the floor, but he also let himself be tied with a bundle of ropes. – The weighing on the third day, which Rosenkreutz was nevertheless allowed to undergo, revealed something quite different from what he himself had expected: He proved to be the heaviest; he was the chosen one, the one who had been awaited the whole time, while those who had gone to the chambers without a care, having been sure of their success, had become much too light, due to which they were chased away and subjected to the harshest punishments.

In any case, Christian Rosenkreutz deliberately placed himself in his powerlessness longer and more intensely than had already happened on his path. That in the hall he also let himself be tied up, was not without reason. Decisive for us is Rudolf Steiner's remark that the powerlessness experienced in this way is fundamentally necessary, for it is what has created the foundation and prerequisite for his later power:

*"In the days that follow, the brother of the Rose-Cross can thus connect his soul-forces with the spiritual world because he agrees on the second day of truth not to see and not to be able to do everything that the others who pushed their way in claim before themselves or before others to be able to see or to do. The feeling of his powerlessness later becomes the power of spiritual experience. He has to let himself be tied up at the end of the second day, because he is supposed to feel the bonds of soul powerlessness in the face of the spirit world until that powerlessness, as such, has been exposed to the light of consciousness for as long as it needs to transform itself into power."*<sup>38</sup>

\*

Anna-Katharina Dehmelt reports that *"in practically all the Steiner exercises"* that she had practiced so far, she *"had experienced something in a short time"*, *"and even if it was a delicate observation or effect"*. But in the light of her attempt, to produce an *"empty consciousness"* (she wanted to practice the stage of *"intuition"*), she *"poked"* *"only helplessly around"*.<sup>39</sup> In her report about it, she quotes at this point a reference of Rudolf Steiner's that refers to a failure in the practicing of intuitive consciousness:

*"But if, after this throwing out of the outer and the inner experiences, there were nothing in his (the pupil's – I.D.) consciousness, that is, if consciousness were ever to die away and he to sink into unconsciousness, then he could recognize from that he has still not made himself mature enough to take up the exercises for intuition; and he would then have to continue the exercises for imagination and inspiration."*<sup>40</sup>

Anna-Katharina Dehmelt, however, did not experience a dying away of her consciousness, rather she even *"flopped back"* into what she calls *"ordinary consciousness"*!

I have already described her subsequent development: she experienced *"increasingly standing at a boundary"*, but from there found no further path. She experienced the powerlessness described by the *"Chymical Wedding"*. But with that she was faced with the most important decision before which anyone seriously involved in the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner will sooner or later be presented with: Will I allow myself to be powerless and remain bound in the dark room lying on the floor? Can I recognize again in this powerlessness, in this failure of my aspiration, what calls into question my previous activity, my previous way of wanting to read and understand Rudolf Steiner? Will I question this, transform it and try to take it up again? Will I even have to start all over again from the beginning? Rethinking and checking over everything, and through that place myself in question? Or I do not want to do this, rather continue as before, because a questioning of my self is too painful, too uncomfortable, and too scary? For who am I, if everything I have done so far is not what I meant to have done? Am I the one who has to place myself in question, or can I avoid it by questioning that which puts me in question? In other words: Do I put myself in question or Rudolf Steiner?

Anna-Katharina Dehmelt opted for the latter; she now did what she had avoided to Rudolf Steiner. She *"overcame"* him by proving to herself that his path is essentially a dead end that without other kinds of influences cannot produce any significant result.

### **"Empty Consciousness"**

It is not by chance that the decision was made at the place where the question of *"empty consciousness"* came up, for the *"empty consciousness"* is directly related to the experience of powerlessness and thus to the threshold (of death). Here, the direction of the path that is being taken will finally be decided. The essential difference that exists between Rudolf Steiner's path and the offers of meditation that are usually based on Eastern traditions, comes about quite clearly from the way in which that *"empty consciousness"* is, as it were, to be produced, how it appears and which place it occupies. Therefore, let us take a closer look at this difference.

According to Rudolf Steiner, the generation of "empty consciousness" belongs to the exercise for inspiration.<sup>41</sup> It comes about from the fact that the content of thought created in the imaginative consciousness is wiped out. Of course the "content" brought about with great strength has to be extinguished in such a way that the soul activity is perceived that brought this content about, instead of the content itself.<sup>42</sup> This exercise is the same as the one Rudolf Steiner describes as the "observation of thinking". No longer does the content of thought (alone) determine the inner struggle, rather the activity of the soul that had brought this content forth enters into the conscious experience. This soul activity is pure, contentless thinking, it is pure activity – pure will.

Rudolf Steiner describes this process in his essay "The Knowledge of the State Between Death and a New Birth"<sup>43</sup> published 100 years ago, which is extremely important for our questions, with the following words:

*"This devotion to the thinking process is pushed so far that one achieves the ability to no longer focus attention on the thoughts in thinking rather solely on the activity of thinking. For consciousness, every thought content then disappears, and the soul experiences itself as knowing within the carrying out of thinking. Thinking thus transforms itself into a fine inner activity of the will that is completely illuminated by consciousness. In ordinary thinking live thoughts; the indicated action eliminates the thought from thinking. The experience that is brought about is a weaving within an inner activity of will that bears its reality within itself. It is about the fact that through continued inner experience in this direction, the soul is led to become as familiar with the purely spiritual reality in which it is weaving, as the observation of the senses is with physical reality."<sup>44</sup>*

Yet this process cannot take place on the basis of any thoughts that would be used to strengthen it (to meditate) and then "extinguish" it;<sup>45</sup> it must be based on a struggle with Rudolf Steiner's special, self-perceptible and self-generating forms of thought. For only these special forms of thought are so shaped that an extinguishing of the content of thought makes possible a thinking and perceiving inversion of the content of thought within itself. To be able to bring this about within the struggling over this: this is the essence of Rudolf Steiner's thinking. This thinking has little to do with what we generally call "thinking." Only working with Rudolf Steiner's forms of thought is capable of forming the organ that corresponds to Anthroposophy. The ability of the future human beings to themselves invert and "speak out" their own being is being prepared through this. The inversion process is brought to its first stage through the extinction of the fullness of content of what is thought (thinking is always only activity and therefore always empty of content).

The difficulty lies in the fact that the inner activity, which can no longer "grab hold of" anything, must nevertheless be maintained, and that until the inner view can turn to this highly concentrated and contentless think-activity. This view, which to begin with does not yet "see" anything, is subject to similar laws of development as the earlier formed "eye". In order for the new "eye" (the organ developing from Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy) to be able to form and also open itself, it has to, just as the organ system that later became the eye had to, always be

brought into the same situation – it has to expose itself to the light of its own activity that is lit up by the writings of Rudolf Steiner.<sup>46</sup>

The emptiness of content that is produced in this work naturally has nothing to do with what Anna-Katharina Dehmelt calls "contentless consciousness." What the "empty content" developed on the meditation instructions of Cohen is all about, she herself described very precisely:

*"It took some time for me to admit that I did not want that: not (to have) any relation to what emerges in my consciousness. Not to the perceptions, not to the ideas, memories, plans, not to the inner chatter and also not to the feelings, moods and habits. Yet how sweet it is to let oneself go into something that makes you want to invest attention and finally to identify, yes, to define by means of what is there right now in consciousness."<sup>47</sup>*

Dehmelt describes here what everyone who begins to meditate knows very well: The everyday consciousness with its petty concerns and occupations makes itself strongly noticeable. For the "emptiness" that according to Cohen is to be created should begin with the everyday consciousness: a greater power than the one that is capable of setting aside the chatter of everyday life is not needed.

The exercises for Rudolf Steiner's intuition are quite different. Here the "everyday chatter" has long ago been burned away in the wakefulness of the concentrated attempt to create Rudolf Steiner's forms of thought within oneself; this actually should have already happened at the first stage at which the exercises for imaginative consciousness happen. A special wakefulness of the thinker (or meditator) is created by the fact that one wants to reach for something that far surpasses oneself. It is created by the attempt (at first in vain) to grasp the ideas of Rudolf Steiner. This effort, which can be increased more and more through Rudolf Steiner's statements or mantras, leads to the meditator "only" experiencing the pure power of thinking (the pure will to think). One experiences the powerlessness of one's ordinary thinking, which is exclusively experienced on the content of thought, and yet in order to continue to be active one only has left over a "*powerful devotion to the process of thinking*" itself.

While in the exercises of Rudolf Steiner the empty (of content) consciousness is brought about with the utmost power of soul in its pure forms of thinking and then also carries this determined formation within itself, through the "empty consciousness" produced by Dehmelt, nothing further is done than a bringing-to-silence of the everyday chatter. This is nothing more than the very first prerequisite for meditative work. That she has really taken this step becomes clear from the fact that for the first time she also began to understand "*what Rudolf Steiner had in view, when he sometimes put veneration and devotion at the beginning of the path of training*".<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, she did not understand it as the foundation from which she could have questioned her previous work with Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy.

### **The "Cookbook Mentality" of Ordinary Consciousness**

Instead, their thoughts went off in a different direction. She explains:

*"But neither Steiner nor Kühlewind give the empty consciousness as something specifically to be practiced.<sup>49</sup> (...) Yet Kühlewind has worked intensively with Zen Buddhism and certainly practiced it; against the background of such experiences, it is easier to let go of the focused object; and Steiner has, at least at the end of his lifetime, pointed out that the empty consciousness has to be practiced – even if he did not give explicit exercises. Maybe that was just not so important at the time. (...) But for Steiner it was not at the center of his interest. For him, the flowing out, the dying away and the resurrection of the foundation of existence within creation stood in the foreground."<sup>50</sup>*

Let us take a closer look at this statement for it makes what is essential visible.

Here it is asserted that for Rudolf Steiner not the empty consciousness was at the center of his interest, but *"the flowing out, the dying away and the resurrection of the foundation of existence within creation"*. A person who sets up such a contradiction does not experience any connection between the "empty consciousness" and the "flowing out, the dying away and the resurrection of the foundation of existence within creation" of Rudolf Steiner. The first is for such an exercise that one can practice, while the second remains a purely external beholding, a lifeless idea. That between the "dying away" and the "resurrection" death comes about – Rudolf Steiner's "empty consciousness", which his readers must experience within themselves – this remains incomprehensible.

The central problem that shows itself here consists in the fact that Rudolf Steiner's work is read and understood as if it were a compilation of information: either that which has tangible and repeatable content, or rather about what presents a precise instruction for a meditation exercise. Such a reading of his writings was described by Rudolf Steiner as "reading a cookbook"; this was just as common in his lifetime as it still is today. If you read his works the way you read cookbooks (namely, with the sole purpose of the immediate usability for ordinary consciousness), however, then he recommended that you should rather resort to cookbooks than those.<sup>51</sup>

That the individual "elements" of Anthroposophy are conceived as standing next to each other without any relationship is one of the characteristics of "cookbook reading". The statements in **Occult Science - An Outline** about the different states of existence of the earth are unrelated to the immediately following statements about the **Knowledge of the Higher Worlds**; the sentences in **Truth and Science** are read as though they had nothing to do with Rudolf Steiner's later explanations on the Mystery of Golgotha and the Fifth Gospel; **The Philosophy of Freedom** stands next to what one understands one is reading in the book **How to Attain Knowledge of the Higher Worlds** without any recognizable connection. This list could be extended indefinitely.

Such an approach corresponds to that of our ordinary consciousness. Through this, important elements – in accord with the world of perception, which appears to be separated from the world of thinking – are experienced as not connected and are accepted as such. Ordinary consciousness is in fact so shaped that a connection, for example between the various experiences of everyday life, to which also the most common actions, such as eating and drinking, as well as, for example a fateful encounter or the study of **Occult Science - An Outline** belong, could not at all be expected. The thinking that came about in Rudolf Steiner,

however, can act as a first seed in us of a new, higher consciousness, for which this relationless 'next to each other' becomes an ever greater riddle of life. This riddle of life has a first answer when the seeker begins to intuit the connections between the different "parts" of Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy (as well as between his different creative periods, which are so gladly viewed as "one after the other" or even as "contradicting each other"). While everything in the everyday world of perception is falling apart, the elements of Anthroposophy mysteriously hold together; they behave like an organism towards each other, which is, however, initially only felt as such. Yet the experience becomes stronger and stronger that no matter what "content" certain statements and remarks by Rudolf Steiner have, all of these different "contents" refer to each other and to the same thing: the one, the whole, the holding-itself-within-itself and with-each-other interconnection. The separation of the world of perception from the thinking of ordinary consciousness begins to overcome itself.

Such an experience can only occur, however, when in the attempted thinking and understanding of Rudolf Steiner's texts the "empty consciousness" is at least to some extent experienced, and this would be whenever those seeking begin to suspect that they do not (yet) understand a great deal in (most of?) these works. This "empty consciousness" (the "not" or "nothing" of Rudolf Steiner, which the attentive reader oddly often finds in his texts) is the glue that holds everything together and out of which the experienced unity works itself out. A process begins that is exactly opposite to that of our ordinary consciousness; whereas, through the fact that our understanding grows in proportion to our dealing with a particular object, higher consciousness makes itself noticeable through the fact that in ordinary consciousness an inkling of its limits arises. The conscious experience of not-understanding presupposes a quiet – real – understanding; the organ of understanding must already have been awakened. As long as I read Anthroposophy exclusively in such a way and try to think as if I understood it, this organ is still in deep sleep, and the more it forms, the clearer becomes the experience of the mystery, of the not-yet-understood, of a consciousness, namely, which far exceeds my previous one.

### **The Central Mystery**

The one who unlocks this mystery also begins to understand why Rudolf Steiner repeatedly emphasized that knowledge of the spiritual world must precede an experience of it.<sup>52</sup> Such a connection is not established by the representatives of "Anthroposophical Meditation", and yet this is precisely where the essential difference between the meditation directions influenced from the East and that of Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy becomes particularly clear.

The Eastern forms of meditation never build on knowledge; they are always based on the "empty consciousness" of the meditator. This is related to the fact that these are forms of meditation that belong to the past; ancient humanity was integrated directly into the divine world of the Father and received its spiritual nourishment (meditating) from that. Since the middle of the 19th century this is definitely no longer possible; "God is dead" – so sang Nietzsche. Now the spiritual world can only be a creation of the human being; the world's foundation of existence has poured itself out into the human being.<sup>53</sup> At this point we are

touching on the greatest mystery: the mystery of the individual being of Rudolf Steiner. This cannot be gone into in any more detail here.<sup>54</sup>

Anna-Katharina Dehmelt searches in vain for signs of "empty consciousness" in Rudolf Steiner's work; she searches for information that corresponds to her ideas that she has made for herself from that. This is why she can only find this where it appears exactly the same as what she expected: as a definite, clearly stated statement of meditation exercises. This type of information she does not find in Rudolf Steiner's work, however in Andrew Cohen's work, and yet Rudolf Steiner's entire work is about the "empty consciousness"; only it always appears in a different form, in other words, in other pictures.

At this point, the mentioned keynote address by Andreas Neider may be taken up again. The remarks of Neider are so interesting for us because they reflect, as it were symptomatically, the situation in which "Anthroposophical Mediation" finds itself. As I have already stated, Neider sees the future of Anthroposophy as reversing that process that took place with the separation of the Anthroposophical from the Theosophical Society, for he himself experienced the limitedness of thought, which he associates with imagination and the Western path. This is why he rejects the possibility of grasping or even generating the supersensible. To reach the stage of knowledge of inspiration, therefore, the feeling cultivated by Eastern spirituality must be practiced. This means that *"the individual powers of thinking need not be intensified, rather have to be completely withdrawn"*.<sup>55</sup> In erasing the *"powers of thought and imagination"* as well as the *"idea of one's self connected with that"*, Neider sees the strongest correspondence between Buddhism and Anthroposophy. Only in this way could the threshold to the spiritual world be crossed over. And he sums up: *"Everything truly spiritual corresponds in this respect to the experience of the not-I."*<sup>56</sup>

Characteristic of Andreas Neider's conception is his idea of Rudolf Steiner's thinking. This shows that he has not yet experienced the special aspect of this thinking; it results exclusively from the experiences of ordinary thinking. Of course every possibility of creating and perceiving what is spiritual must be denied to ordinary thinking.

Hand in hand with this goes that of the "I." Again here, the underlying idea is limited to the "I" of everyday consciousness. It is not possible to fall back on any I-experience that originates in the "empty consciousness" of the attempted thinking of Rudolf Steiner's sentences. That on such a background of experience, the Eastern spirituality must appear superior to Anthroposophy, is quite natural, and yet Andreas Neider, a long-time co-worker in the publishing house Freies Geistesleben in Stuttgart and editor responsible for the "Mitteilungen aus dem Anthroposophischen Arbeit in Deutschland", could – in the light of the knowledge that he does have of Rudolf Steiner's work – also have developed questions. Yet the opinion represented by him does stand in blatant contradiction to all that Rudolf Steiner has ever uttered. These questions, some of which should now be mentioned, could have led him to the fact that he should not have produced such connections as those appearing in his paper.

Why did the separation of the Anthroposophical Society from the Theosophical occur on the occasion of the naming of the Hindu boy Krishnamurti as the reincarnated Christ and of the founding of the Star Order by Annie Besant? Why does Rudolf Steiner see the Mystery of Golgotha as the most central,

greatest Mystery in world history? Why does he speak and write about it over and over again – in the most varied forms, in the most diverse approaches? Would all this really have nothing to do with what was then demanded and promoted by him as meditation?

At this point, these questions are indeed asked, but not answered. The readers may, if they so wish, even try to give answers.

Irene Diet, end of August, 2018

## Footnotes:

1. Even though the so-called "Anthroposophical Meditation" is carried and taught by different, even differently working, individuals, these individuals often appear together in conferences, colloquiums, in newsletters and anthologies, and any differences and conflicts between them play a subordinate role. The common consensus is – consciously – maintained, so that they face the viewer as a fairly uniform group. Since 2017, the relevant German-speaking meditation teachers have come together on an internet site (see: [www.Anthroposophische-meditation.org](http://www.Anthroposophische-meditation.org) ; which includes: Markus Buchmann, Frank Burdich, Anna-Katharina Dehmelt, Corinna Gleide, Agnes Hardorp, Steffen Hartmann, Christoph Hueck, Dirk Kruse, Thomas Mayer, Andreas Neider, Ulrike Wendt, Bodo von Plato and Robin Schmidt); they come together under a common name, a common motto and a common explanation of what is here understood by "Anthroposophical Meditation". The group of German-speaking meditation teachers, however, is much larger. The "Institute for Anthroposophical Meditation" led by Anna-Katharina Dehmelt includes other meditation teachers (here are: Rudi Ballreich, Sebastian Gronbach, Wolfgang Kilthau, Christoph Lindenau and Dorian Schmidt), and also they work on an international scale – going out from the Goetheanum – on a network that has been active since 2010 under the name "Goetheanum Meditation Initiative Worldwide" (the founders of this initiative are Bodo von Plato and Robin Schmidt). Here, the need to "*make meditation work more visible in our current cultural life*" is even referred to as the "*core task of the Goetheanum*" (see: <http://www.meditation.goetheanum.org/die-initiative/geschichte/> ). One of the distinctive signs of "Anthroposophical Meditation" thus concerns bringing about something that is a major concern of this movement: a variety of conferences and colloquia events, also through the establishment of broad, comprehensive, even international "networks", that may then be designated as "*collegiality, connection and visibility*" (See: <http://www.meditation.goetheanum.org/die-initiative/geschichte> ). The unified appearance is thus one of the most important characteristics of "Anthroposophical Meditation", which is why these ones here – in spite of certain individual differences – should also be treated like this.
2. <https://ignisverlag.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/meditation-und-Anthroposophie-wo-ist-der-zusammenhang-21-mc3a4rz-20183.pdf>
3. The first open letter from A.-K. Dehmelt to me: <http://www.infameditation.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Dehmelt-Diet.pdf> and my answer: <https://ignisverlag.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Antwort-von-Irene-Diet-auf-offenen-Brief-von-A.-K.-Dehmelt-9-June-2018.pdf> ; the second open letter from A.-K. Dehmelt to me: <http://www.infameditation.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Dehmelt-Diet-II.pdf> and my answer: <https://ignisverlag.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Zweiter-offener-Brief-an-A.-K.Dehmelt.pdf>
4. Rudolf Steiner, **The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz**, in: GA 35, p. 343. Emphasis mine – I.D.
5. See Gleide, Corinna, Imagination and Inspiration. Second research colloquium in Stuttgart, in: **Die Drei**, 7-8 / 2015, p. 73ff.
6. Co-founders apart from them are: Christoph Hueck, Lorenzo Ravagli, Dorian Schmidt and Valentin Wember.

7. Neider, Andreas, The East-West Contrast. The necessary supplementation of the imagination by inspiration, in: **Die Drei**, 9/2015, S. 13ff.
8. Ibid., p. 14.
9. Neider, Andreas, The East-West Contrast., Supra, p. 15.
10. Ibid., p. 16.
11. The brief discussion that followed the publication of this article has a different background. See in: **Die Drei**, 10/2015.
12. The strong devotion of the Theosophical Society to Hinduism and Buddhism, supported by Annie Besant, led to the splitting off of the Anthroposophical Society in 1913, since Rudolf Steiner, Secretary-General of the German Theosophical Society, refused the message of salvation according to which Krishnamurti, an Indian boy, as a reincarnation of Jesus Christ, should be recognized, accepted and defended.
13. Ibid., p. 19.
14. Ibid., p. 20. Emphasis mine – I.D.
15. Ibid., p. 21.
16. Ibid. Emphasis mine – I.D.
17. Ibid., p. 22. The Buddhist Anatman doctrine, the doctrine of the "non-self" or "not-I," states that there is no permanent self, immutable essence, and immortal soul. The "not-I" here actually means the dissolution of each individual being.
18. Ibid., p. 24.
19. In this interview he describes this path on the portal "Anthroposophical Meditation" at "Motives of Buddhist and Anthroposophical Meditation"; <http://www.Anthroposophische-meditation.org/andreas-neider/>
20. See here u.a. ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. See Dehmelt, A.-K., From Living Thinking and Empty Consciousness, in: **Die Drei** 7-8 / 2012, p. 17ff.
23. Ibid., p. 19.
24. Ibid., p. 21.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., p. 22. Emphasis mine – I.D.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Following these experiences, Anna-Katharina Dehmelt held several seminars together with Andrew Cohen. (See, among others, Dehmelt, Anna-Katharina, Meditation and Evolution.) A seminar with Andrew Cohen in November, 2012, in: The Goetheanum, 23 February 2013, p. 14. On May 10, 2013 another seminar with Cohen took place in Basel at which the former General Secretary, Arthur Zajonc, of the AG in the USA also took part.) The relationship was intensified by EnlightenNext's Frankfurt-based radio station, at which alongside Anna-Karharina Dehmelt also spoke Jens Heisterkamp, Wolfgang Held and Bodo von Plato. (See, among others, Dehmelt, Anna-Katharina, Meditation and Evolution. A seminar with Andrew Cohen in November 2012, in: **Das Goetheanum**, 23 February 2013, p. 14. On May 10, 2013; another seminar with Cohen took place in Basel, at which Arthur Zajonc, former Secretary-

General of the USA, also took part.) EnlightenNext, earlier founded by Andrew Cohen, is still one of the cooperation partners of Anna-Katharina Dehmelt's "Institute for Anthroposophical Meditation" and is headed by, Thomas Steiniger, among other things the head of the "Studium Generale in Integral Evolutionary Spirituality, People in Spirit". And quite especially Sebastian Gronbach, also a cooperation partner of the "Institute for Anthroposophical Meditation", who belongs to the closer circle around Cohen, who, after the fall of the Guru – a number of different abuse cases (see: <http://www.strippingthegurus.com/stgsamplechapters/cohen.html>) were proven against Cohen, – was still "in love" with him.

(See <https://egoistenblog.blogspot.com/2016/10/er-ist-wieder-da.html>).

30. Georg Kühlewind (1924-2006), a Hungarian Anthroposophist, can be regarded as the founder and pioneer of today's attempt to combine Anthroposophy and Eastern meditation practices. See, inter alia. **Meditations on Zen Buddhism, Thomas Aquinas and Anthroposophy**, 1999, **Light and Freedom. A Guide to Meditation**, 2004.

31. interview, conducted by R. Richter, July 31, 2018, <https://www.info3-magazin.de/auf-dem-weg-zu-einan-Anthroposophischen-zen/> Emphasis mine – I.D.

32. cit. according to GA 8, p. 69.

33. Rudolf Steiner, **The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz**, in: *ibid.*, pp. 332-390.

34. See: Chymical wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz: Anno 1459, in: **The Brotherhood of the Rosicrucians. Esoteric texts**, ed. By G. Wehr, Munich 1984, p. 116ff.

35. See *Ibid.*, p. 118.

36. *Ibid.* Emphasis mine – I.D

37. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

38. Rudolf Steiner, **The Chymical Wedding**, op. Cit., P. 358. Emphasis mine – I.D.

39. Dehmelt, A.-K., On Living Thinking, *supra*, p. 21.

40. Rudolf Steiner, **Occult Science - An Outline**, GA 13, p. 368.

41. Anna-Katharina Dehmelt refers repeatedly to a lecture by Rudolf Steiner on May 26, 1914 (GA 84). In this, the "empty consciousness" is clearly assigned to the level of inspiration, but not to intuition as she does. The statements of Rudolf Steiner in **Occult Science - An Outline** are similarly clear, another source that she always refers to. (GA 13, see above p. 359ff.). So she knew that she had to do her work at least in the exercises for inspiration, because she had already failed. Instead, in her essay, she presents the process in such a way that she would have known only at the level of intuition. These and similar ambiguities form the foundation on which "Anthroposophical Meditation" is based, which creates a great deal of confusion.

42. "I now want to live inwardly in my own activity, which created the picture. So I do not want to sink into any picture, but into my own image-forming activity." Quotation According to R. Steiner, **Occult Science - An Outline**, GA 13, p. 360.

43. In: Rudolf Steiner, **Philosophy and Anthroposophy 1904-1923**, GA 35, pp. 269-306. For all those who are interested in a truly Anthroposophical meditation, this essay is highly recommended.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 276. Emphasis mine – I.D.

45. Such a mistake is still widespread today; e.g. through the work of Mieke Mosmuller. See u.a. Diet, Irene, **The Secret of the Language Rudolf Steiner**, IGNIS Verlag 2013.

46. Goethe already referred to this connection: "The eye has to thank the light for its existence. Out of indifferent animal auxiliary organs, the light calls forth an organ that will be its equal; and so the eye forms itself in the light for the light, so that the inner light may meet the outer light." See J. W. Goethe, **Zur Farbenlehre**, Introduction.
47. Dehmelt, A.-K., Of Living Thinking, *supra*, p. 23.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
49. This statement is highly peculiar; evidently she can only recognize an exercise in "empty consciousness" as such, if Rudolf Steiner uses exactly these words, and yet Rudolf Steiner very often, even directly, established the connection between inspiration and empty consciousness, e.g. in GA 243, p 43: "One can now go further in the strengthening and intensification of the soul life, one can not only meditate, concentrate, as I have described in the books mentioned, but one can strive for what one considers to be a strong soul content in the soul, in order to get rid of it, so that one comes to it, after one has first intensified the soul life, with all the power that thinking, that feeling have made strong, then in turn to weaken it all and even bring it to nothing. In order for that to be brought about that is called empty consciousness." See, *inter alia* also GA 25, p. 49 and GA 84, pp. 25 and 228.
50. Dehmelt, A.-K., Of Living Thinking, *supra*, pp. 25f.
51. See: <https://ignisverlag.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Rudolf-Steiner-Ein-abasser-von-Kochbüchern.pdf>
52. "So strange as it sounds; it presents itself as a result of experiencing in the spiritual world: the physical world exists for human beings at first as an external factual connection; and we acquire a knowledge of it after it has approached us as such a factual connection; the spiritual world, on the other hand, forwards knowledge from itself, and the knowledge which it has previously sparked in the soul is the light that must radiate upon the spiritual world, so that it can manifest itself as fact." Rudolf Steiner, The Knowledge of the state between death and a new birth, in: **Philosophy and Anthroposophy 1904-1923**, GA 35, p. 285f.
53. "The foundation of the world has completely poured itself out into the world; it did not withdrawn itself from the world to direct it from the outside, it directs it from within; it did not keep anything back from the world. The highest form in which it appears within the reality of ordinary life is thought and with that the human personality." Rudolf Steiner, **A Theory of Knowledge Implicit in Goethe's World Conception**, GA 2, p. 125.
54. See Rudolf Steiner, **Mein Lebensgang (Autobiography)**, IGNIS Verlag 2017.
55. Neider, Andreas, **The East-West Contrast**, *loc. Cit.*, P. 21.
56. *Ibid.*, P. 22.