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"CORONA"

Or: The Wavering Illusion of Reality

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„ Even if at one time it seemed as if the Gods had disappeared, as if they were not here, as if humanity had been abandoned by them, the wisdom of the Gods consisted in the fact that human beings were to receive the impulse to first now seek them in the places where they had hidden themselves but not to complain about their disappearance and their inactivity."

Rudolf Steiner on June 17, 1923, in: CW 259, p.155.

The „Breaking out" of the Virus" as the „Breaking into" Consciousness

If someone had told me at the turn of the year 2019/20 that governments around the world would soon call for restrictions on contact, that country borders, schools, stores, restaurants, offices, businesses, clubs, sports and theaters would close, and that through the media a daily new flood of fear would pour out over people – because of a virus said to cause illness and death in the millions, as we were told –; if someone had told me that on German state television at "prime time" I would soon have Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft, presented by German Chancellor Angela Merkel as the savior in this crisis, that any analyzing of the occurrence of the virus would be ignored or branded as "conspiracy theory"; if someone had told me that, here in Germany, I would encounter strange hooded figures who dodge away on the street and remain at a distance — 1.5 meters, if you please –; if someone had told me that my neighbor – because of possible infection – would not be allowed to say goodbye to her son dying of cancer; that the elderly isolated from political life would choose suicide out of loneliness, as well as those who commit suicide due to fear of the illness; if someone had told me this: *I would not have believed them*. I would have laughed at them for their wild, utterly abstruse fantasy and would not have thought about their prophecy for a single minute.

This experience of the unforeseen, the incomprehensible and the inconceivable I have been having every day anew since the outbreak of the crisis. It is intensifying in such a way that every possibility of foreseeing things is withdrawn from me. Yes, at certain moments I notice: Every idea that begins to form in me – about the past, the present and above all about the future – disappears. As soon as a new one arises, still another one places itself over it and disrupts it, and out of this visible, touchable familiarity that is vanishing away, out of the inner silence spreading out within me, rings forth a question: What is reality?

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The impossibility of bringing the often paradoxical events triggered by the Corona Crisis into a logically thought out context can lead to a sort of "displacement" of our sense of reality. This "displacement" could be compared to the shifting of theater scenes, whereby behind them would be revealed not the bare stage, of course, rather the thinking that the author had laid down as the foundation for the play being performed on the stage. A presentation of this completely new way of looking at things that is thus being revealed, will be attempted in what follows. It is not the events as such that are to stand in the middle and be explained, rather it is the soul experience that can be inflamed on this special occurrence.

I am well aware of the unusualness of my approach. I am also aware that this attempt I am venturing bears all the signs of something initial and therefore imperfect. Nonetheless, I would like to let the interested reader take part in it, for I believe that we are now at the beginning of a development that makes such a soul activity possible, and also necessary. Coming events will further intensify the above described paradoxical coloring of what can be experienced about this.

The soul experience that comes into consideration with this, I know from my own work on the texts of Rudolf Steiner. Yet the experience described here enters through a different "gateway" into my world of experience; the starting point is not, as with the work on the texts of Rudolf Steiner, a concentrated thinking experiencing itself, which on the one hand dissolves its usual meaningfulness and on the other hand – conveyed by the thought-texture of Rudolf Steiner's sentences – lets a completely new kind of meaningfulness be intuited. I experience now that something similar is taking place in the form of the destiny acting on me "from outside" through the sense impressions being freed from the usual sense connections, as if emerging from the stream of life itself. In the attempted living through of this outer occurrence, "connections" previously assumed as self understood disappear, and in the gap widening out in this way, the view can open up that will accompany this soul activity now made possible.

Rudolf Steiner described this soul activity several times, and first and foremost "philosophically". This philosophical background will remain unapproached here, but those who know **The Philosophy of Freedom** will certainly not fail to notice these relationships. With regard to the above noted "displacement" of the stage scenery, this has to do with a beginning experience on the other side of the constitution of ordinary consciousness. In his Anthroposophical writings, Rudolf Steiner designated this as a "second awakening" that shows similarities to the awakening of the dreaming sleeper. In a beginning way in the following, a description of this awakening will be attempted. That is to say, I believe that from this can result a completely new way of understanding world events, and out of this new understanding, the finding of a form of activity appropriate to them that may be capable of placing itself in an appropriately realistic relationship to the birth of the true and even necessary soul need of the *present time* that is announcing itself.¹

In a first step, I would like to take up an event that took place around Rudolf Steiner: the Goetheanum fire and its consequences.

The Disappeared Goetheanum

Half a year after the Goetheanum fire, a general assembly of the Goetheanum Building Association took place beside the burned-down Goetheanum in the carpentry shop, which was the most important building saved. At that meeting, Rudolf Steiner made a speech² that he began with the following words:

*"For me, as well, speaking to you today will be different and with a different background than could happen at these meetings in past years, for we are standing, yes remaining, under the impressions of the destruction of our beloved Anthroposophical building, the Goetheanum."*³

From that day on, Rudolf Steiner could speak differently than before, since those sitting in front of him had been shaken by a deeply shattering experience.

A few months earlier, the building that had become visible through their own years-long work had burned down. During the past ten years, that building had become the center of their – with certainty believed – way of seeing themselves; within a rather "hostile" minded world, the friends of Anthroposophy had found in it the expression that corresponded to their deepest longings and that shimmered down visibly over everything into the – non-Anthroposophical – world from the Dornach hill.

¹ On this, see the essay by Rüdiger Blankertz: Soll die Seelennot der Gegenwart durch Geisterkenntnis (behooben) werden? oder: Anthroposophische Sozialpastoren verschönern Texte Rudolf Steiners (Should the Soul Need of the Present-day be (remedied) through Spirit Knowledge? or: Anthroposophical Social Pastors are making Rudolf Steiner's Texts more Attractive), www.menschenkunde.com. Short link: ogy.de/tfjy – also in: Agora-Magazin, Dec. 2017, p. 17ff.

² Rudolf Steiner, Address at the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Goetheanum Association, Dornach, Sunday June 17, 1923, in: CW 259, pp. 146ff.

³ Ibid.

Yet within one night – the night of New Year's Eve 1922 to New Year's Day 1923⁴ – it had disappeared, and all that was left over, besides the sad, still smoking remains of the fire and a few nearby buildings, was the rather unprepossessing work shop. Everything, which they had felt as their "pride", because the building had made something visible, tangible, audible, palpable that in its being is actually not visible, not tangible, not audible and not palpable, which had lent them an inner security through an outwardly perceptible existence, had gone up in flames.

Almost half a year had passed by since that shock, but now there was new hope: The expected insurance money of 3 million had arrived. It was a simple calculation: the remaining funds needed could be quickly raised.

Rudolf Steiner's speech was preceded by a speech by the then Chairman of the Building Association, Emil Grosheintz.⁵ Emil Grosheintz can be seen as a typical representative of all those who had closely clustered around Rudolf Steiner from the beginning, who understood themselves as his pupils, confidants and co-workers, and who devoted their entire lives to the resulting pupil and supporter group. In public life, as well, he was an important advocate of the Anthroposophical initiative.

At the center of Grosheintz's speech was the general expectation that the burning down of the Goetheanum would be reversed – by a rebuilding of it – as quickly as possible. According to Grosheintz, the up to this point proven "*passive courage*" to endure that blow of destiny should now be supplemented by a higher one, namely an "*active courage*". This "*active courage*" was for him, however, a "*call to action*" – an action that could only consist in the rebuilding of the Goetheanum.⁶ At the end of his speech, Grosheintz asked those present to stand if they wanted to go along with the intention expressed by him to ask Rudolf Steiner for the rebuilding of the Goetheanum. The minutes of the meeting say that all the listeners stood up.⁷

After this speech by Emil Grosheintz, they would have awaited Rudolf Steiner's speech full of excitement and anticipation, for they were certain: The "Doctor", as so often, would, following their "expression of will"⁸, perform a miracle and re-erect the building destroyed by the flames just as beautiful – if not even more beautiful!

Rudolf Steiner's speech, as it were, presupposes Emil Grosheintz's speech, which expressed the state of mind of most of those present; without it, the process of consciousness, which only became possible through the abyss between the two, could not completely have taken place.

The Great De-Deception {a deception of a deception is meant, but also a disappointment -Tr.}

Rudolf Steiner spoke into a very special soul situation of his listeners; prepared through an "outer destiny" – the burning down of the Goetheanum, which had sparked the hope of a quick re-erecting of it – his words could more than ever become an "inner destiny". An inner destiny, however, starts at the moment when a person begins to become conscious of their own soul activity that is being reflected in the events of destiny and, as it were, "bounces off" these.

The first step that made this 'becoming conscious' possible was a de-deception: the basic attitude of Rudolf Steiner, which became apparent right from the beginning, showed that he did not want to perform the hoped-for miracle – the reconstruction of the First Goetheanum.

⁴ Rudolf Steiner speaks again and again of the fact that the annual New Year's Eve must be felt as "World New Year's Eve" (!).

⁵ Ibid., p. 547ff.

⁶ Ibid., p. 549.

⁷ Ibid. p. 551.

⁸ In truth, this was not a decision of will, rather a wish that was put forward to Rudolf Steiner.

In other words, instead of speaking about the future reconstruction, the money still needed, etc., he characterized the soul attitude of his listeners, and he did this in such a way that the de-deception he brought forth in his listeners was also expressed in his words, yet this, as it were, coming "from the other side" and, through this, doubling their own disappointment due to what was expressed by him.

Rudolf Steiner explained:

*"(...) I might have imagined that at the time when that terrible misfortune hit us, there could also have been souls among Anthroposophists who would have said: Well, why have the good spiritual powers not protected us in this case? Can one believe in the effectiveness of a movement that is abandoned in this way by the good Spirits? Such a thought connects right onto something outer, does not connect onto something, unaffected by something outer, that comes simply out of the inner center of the matter. If one wants to take it seriously, that attitudes, thoughts, especially impulses of consciousness are realities, then one has to believe in things oneself, in these impulses of consciousness, in these thoughts, and in these feelings, not in the help that they can be from outside, rather in their own strength. Then one has to be certain that whatever one creates from out of such impulses, in spite of all apparent outer failure, comes to its correct goal, to the goal prescribed for it in the spiritual world; even then, if one day it were completely destroyed by the external circumstances in the outer world."*⁹

These words must have worked like a blow on Rudolf Steiner's listeners. In doing so, they not only shattered the general expectation brought to expression by Grosheintz of rebuilding that Goetheanum to which they owed their self-awareness and their special self-esteem as "Anthroposophists". At the same time, they thereby characterized the attitude of soul that had first led to this expectation, and in fact as such a one that could not have been the Anthroposophical one, yes, that was even unworthy of an Anthroposophist; for instead of turning to external doing (to the wish designated by Grosheintz as "active courage" to have the Goetheanum erected again), Rudolf Steiner appealed to what "comes from the inner center of the matter". One should connect onto "impulses of consciousness", "not in the help that they can have from outside, rather in their own strength".

But what were these "impulses of consciousness"?

In between Courage and Doubt

For those present, a gap of understanding would now have opened up. Had not the impulse to rebuild the Goetheanum, just such an "impulse of consciousness" as demanded by Rudolf Steiner, in fact been meant by them! For, was it not the expression of an unbroken courage – arising out of the inner center of the matter – to hold fast to the thing already begun? Was this impulse not the expression of the effectiveness, indeed the demonstrated truth of the Anthroposophical impulse?

Rudolf Steiner explained further:

*"Whoever wants to prove or refute the truth or the untruth of the spiritual from something outer, will find themselves on the wrong path; for they are not within the center of the spiritual impulse, rather outside. For the evaluation of what comes into question here, only the innermost nature of the human heart and feelings {Gemut} alone is decisive, never in any way an outer connection."*¹⁰

⁹ Rudolf Steiner, speech, op. Cit., p.147f.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.149.

From the words of Rudolf Steiner, those whose ears were open could hear: In truth, the reconstruction of the Goetheanum they were demanding was a sign of their doubt, that in fact the true symbol of Anthroposophy – the building – went up in flames, and it's burning down could not be prevented: Had they not experienced a weakness of this spirit impulse themselves in all of this?

The doubt that had initially been ignited by the outer disappearance of the Goetheanum, now drew into people's heart and feelings (Gemut): What is it within me that I rightly designate as "that which is Anthroposophical"? Wasn't the reconstruction longed for by me – basically – simply an expression of my doubt about the Anthroposophical cause. That which I took for the core of my Anthroposophical existence, is fundamentally the doubt about Anthroposophy itself! – Their proud self-understanding, which in view of the "courageous" expressions demanded by Groscheintz had just been made visible for everyone, had been destroyed; and into this doubt echoed the words of Rudolf Steiner:

"For the evaluation of what comes into question here, only the innermost nature of the human heart and feelings {Gemut} is decisive, never in any way an outer connection."

The fire had taken away from those present the outwardly visible sign of their Anthroposophical existence. Now, however, they were losing a second thing: the inner trust in the truth of their soul reaction to the physical event of the fire, for now it became clear to them: this supposedly "inner nature" was basically also something "outer"; as an "inner nature", it was nothing more than a (naive-banal) reaction to the outer occurrence. But what then was it, that "*innermost nature of the human heart and feelings {Gemut}*", which alone "*for the evaluation of what comes into question here*" could be decisive? Is there an "inner nature" that is more than just an answer to an outer occurrence?

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It is materialistic thinking that, where creation processes take place, always only expects an "existence". At the point where destruction begins, that "existence" draws back for that thinking. The much-cited "spirit", however, does not appear in the 'coming into being' of the physically visible, rather only in its destruction.

To feel and understand this with all one's being belongs to the most difficult and most painful tasks of those for whom the work of Rudolf Steiner is the meaning of their life. Yet at the same time it is their most important task, for only in this way can the death processes, in which all of humanity finds itself today, be consciously accompanied.

The "displacement" of one's familiar worldview called forth by today's events and mentioned at the beginning is, I believe, demanded, so to say, by what is appearing in the present day world. This can lead to an awakening that – on another level – is similar to the awakening through which the dreaming sleeper transitions to day consciousness.

In the following, the process experienced by me will be described as an example of such a beginning awakening.

"..for the spiritual slips out of things at the point where they begin to dissolve" ¹²

The first experience I can have in the slipping away of my usual "feeling of reality" relates to the character of its past state. I can grasp that what was previously considered "reality" by me always seems to be present as a "given"; every morning it emerges anew out of the "nothingness" of sleep. Yet the self-understoodness with which this "given" appeared was not fully conscious for me.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Rudolf Steiner, lecture in Dornach, May 23, 1916, in: CW 162, p. 23.

This undisplaceable self-understoodness only now, out of the "displacement" of it, enters into my consciousness.

Since this experience has been renewed almost non-stop since the outbreak of the "Corona Crisis", I can begin to observe the states coming about in this way. They are the shattering feelings I experience from the extremely paradoxical events and processes that are always capable of leading me anew into these states.

The first experience I can have from the point of view of my new soul state does not refer to this state, rather to the past. I am amazed to find – looking back – that for me, "what was given" in that way, has become unconscious as a given reality. At the same time, however, it was "what was real" that was taken as "reality" by me. Now, however, this formerly unconscious feeling of "reality" is being displaced, and in the gap thus created a space is opening up that is of a very different nature than those soul spaces that in their totality were considered by me as "reality". Those well known soul spaces were "filled" spaces; filled with feelings, thoughts, ideas, etc., that consisted of what had formed in me as response to an outer or inner "thing represented". Within (and between) these soul spaces filled with very specific "contents", I was quite capable of bringing up different elements in order to consider them, think about them, or to feel them, yet it was always such considerations, thoughts and feelings that had – as it were out of themselves – presented themselves from the given content.

Now, however, I discover a completely new soul space. It is a space "empty of content" that reveals itself in the gap in my changed experience. This soul space first enables me to work freely – without previously being determined –, but from this experience I recognize that my previous soul activity had always been determined, yes "bound", in fact, by something particular. The quality of the formerly given elements appears to me as part of a world of things represented within my inner soul nature. That previous determination has now been superseded. Yet not only this: When feeling this new soul space, I learn apart from it that – in contrast to the "given" soul content spaces – it only exists then when, and only so long as, I am capable of holding upright the inner activity resulting from the dissolution of my object consciousness. It immediately collapses into itself when I abate this inner soul activity, which has the character of a feeling seeking. With this I, as it were, feel my own activity in which I seek to try to experience myself as the one seeking.

On further contemplation, now become possible, of this soul activity referring to itself, I can recognize that that which was formerly "given", which now eludes me, was by no means as uniform as it appeared to me at one time – leaving aside that I might have become conscious of it. Now I notice that it consists of various "fragments" only holding together like unrelated individual parts that only received their apparent togetherness because they all occurred "in me" one after the other or at the same time. I now realize: Every single fragment of my former "reality" refers to a part of what I call "my life"; they are parts that have formed in the outer course of this life and merely reflect this outer course as ideas in my ordinary consciousness; and so my former "reality" appears as a totality of ideas that now, from the point of view of my new state, look like dream structures. About the inner connection of these structures I would not have asked; it seemed to me to be given. Now is to be seen: A thinkable connection between the individual "fragments of reality" is "in itself" not present at all.

Just as the person awakening from sleep realizes that the connection between the individual dream images experienced in a dream was an illusion, I now recognize the illusory nature of the connection I once experienced between my individual "life fragments".

This illusion reveals itself as just such a one at the moment when I try to think of a connection between these merely given elements. This is now proving, in fact, to be impossible.

The sleep or dream consciousness, which makes up my everyday life, I recognize as such at the moment when – due to the painful, deafening, trumpeting sound of events – I have had to fully awaken out of that state. Now, however, it becomes clear that what was given to me as my former "reality" has also created "myself". Or in other words: My usual "self" disappears to the extent that the merely dreamed "reality" of my former sense of existence draws away from me. The "inner ground" on which I thought I was standing and from which – as I can only now see – I also received my self-consciousness, is drawing away from me. In this loss, the former "I-experience-myself" proves to be just as much an illusion as the former experience of my surrounding world.

In that I have been thrown out of ordinary dream consciousness, a feeling of fear and loneliness is making itself felt. To the extent that I become aware that I myself am beginning to accompany this process of awakening, something else shows itself. Quietly and sometimes barely audible, an inner certainty sounds forth that the experiences described here are the beginning of what I will be able to justifiably designate as "reality". Namely, the reality that has already always reappeared as intuition in my thinking self-observation while studying the texts of Rudolf Steiner.

The Reality of the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner

The putting into question of the usual sense of reality, which is so directly laid before us by events today, can be experienced in a more precise and differentiated manner by the reader becoming conscious of themselves while reading the texts of Rudolf Steiner. This putting into question always takes place when those reading leave the familiar dimension of reading, which is always only focused on the so-called "content" of the texts, and begin observing themselves in their thinking activity. This self-observation begins at the moment when they catch themselves putting their own understanding of the text above Rudolf Steiner's words and thus – unnoticed and unconsciously – erasing them.

The path that is now opening up will no longer be able to be a dream-like intellectual interpreting of the thought explanations and occult communications of Rudolf Steiner. It will become an increasingly conscious, wide awake soul path into a region that is designated by Rudolf Steiner as the "spiritual world". The first experience of the appearance of true reality on the path described here, basically relates to the experience at the threshold to the "spiritual world". Every further step on this path will depend on the fact that the organ of perception is formed and shaped at this threshold on what has been brought into our intellectual world of illusions from beyond the threshold – as Rudolf Steiner's words put it in an Anthroposophical text – so that we are able to find the right way out of this illusion with our own strength. How this can happen is to be described in more detail in later articles.

Irene Diet, June 7, 2020