

## LIFE, KNOWLEDGE, ANTHROPOSOPHY

*I published this text privately as a booklet in 1982. If the reader wonders why I did it privately, it is because I did not know at the time, nor do I still know now, of any anthroposophical publisher who would publish these materials. What was more, the two main anthroposophical bookshops, the one in the English speaking world, at Rudolf Steiner House in London, and the other international, at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, refused to sell my booklet. They did not give their reasons, but just banned it, like some kind of 'anthroposophical pornography'.*

Presented here are written and enlarged versions of the two talks with which I addressed some friends in Forest Row. It was only after the talks that I decided to put them on paper for sharing with the community at large. The talks were given on different occasions, for different reasons, to different people, and at an interval of a few years. But they both are concerned with the same vital issues which are responsible for the title of this paper.

As the readers will see I am not dealing here with the concepts of life, knowledge and Anthroposophy as such, my main concern being our relations with these three phenomena. Though the expression of this concern, as represented here, is by necessity individual and subjective the concern itself will be shared, so I sincerely hope, by the readers.

### I

A common interest in such an "exotic" subject as UFOs has brought some friends in Forest Row together to exchange their experiences and views on it. It was an interesting but at the same time somewhat chaotic exchange which prompted my question, "Why really do we want to know about them?" As a result I was asked (in full agreement with the current Russian wisdom which I had never managed to absorb – Initiative is Punishable) to lead our group's next discussion on this very question.

As I started contemplating the question it became clear to me that I could not confine myself to one particular object of knowledge, however vast and important, without first trying to understand why *at all* we want to know - anything under the sun. What had resulted from my endeavour I saw as a challenge to one who wants to embark on the path of knowledge. As such I shared it with other members of the group and am sharing it now with the community at large.

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When people are confronted with something new, hitherto unknown to them, which poses for them a question as to its nature they tend to show three basic attitudes to it.

Some people say bluntly, "I don't know and I don't want to know anything about it." There are, to be sure, others who whenever confronted with something new state quite categorically that they know *what it is*. Whatever their final verdict – "rubbish," "hallucination," "well known fact" or even "such and such new phenomenon" – they are quite satisfied with it and do not seek further knowledge. The above attitudes stop short of any striving for knowledge and therefore are outside our interest in the context of this paper, which tries to understand why people *want* to know and not why they *do not want* to know.

What is the object of our interest and concern here is the third type of attitude when people say, "I don't know and I want to know." This statement contains not only that very element we want to investigate, "I want to know," but also another one, "I don't know," which at the first glance might seem to be the cause for the former, therefore making our investigation pointless.

Had it been really so, had the lack of knowledge been the only and automatic reason for wanting to know, there would have been very little difference indeed between

man and programmed computer in which every negative signal triggers a positive signal circuit. But the words "I don't know and I want to know" are not an impassive formula of a lifeless electronic logic, but a manifestation of complex, contradictory and striving human nature. As, such they might signify something more, or less, or altogether different from their lexical meaning. Their real meaning often concealed even from those who say them – that is what we are after.

If we appreciate that to everything in the world corresponds a certain amount of objective knowledge about it (which could be called a "concept"), then our words "I don't know" said about something should refer to *all* knowledge appertaining to it whatever its scope and nature. We may very well anticipate some of it, but strictly speaking our anticipation is not identical with the knowledge itself and in no way should influence its flow towards us, i.e. the process of our cognition. Only later on when and if the knowledge has been revealed to us can we compare it with what was anticipated and allow ourselves to be disappointed or pleased.

With respect to knowledge which is yet unrevealed, uncognized, one is reminded of a yet unborn child. Both are, as it were, their own independent entities, beings belonging to "another world." It is we, however, who call them to life into "our world," but do we receive both in the same way?

As various expectations, hopes, and even desires naturally enter our souls in anticipation of a yet unborn child, in the same natural way they are transformed later on into the awe and reverence with which we receive a newly born child. While in the case of knowledge our preconceived ideas, opinions, judgements place such an enormous demand on a yet unborn knowledge-being that it has a very slim chance to be born at all. We receive it not with awe and reverence but with all sorts of demands and restrictions stemming from our accustomed way of thinking in full accordance with which we are prepared to, and in fact do, shred a poor baby into an ugly cripple. We can hardly conceive of a man chopping off, deforming or adding to existing organs of his newly born child because in his opinion some of them are superfluous, faulty or missing (though later in life he does maim his child mentally and spiritually by bringing up and educating him according to his own fashion but not to the needs with which the child has come to earth). But it is exactly what happens with new knowledge when one meets it with a biased attitude, with ideas taken for granted and with judgements inherited from previous experiences.

This can be easily observed in concrete situations. When somebody says "I don't know" about a new phenomenon it is worthwhile trying to probe the boundaries of his statement and see whether his open-mindedness provides an adequate space for a free flow of new knowledge to fill it up. What we are most likely to discover as a result of the flow would be a very tiny and shallow puddle containing a few drops of new knowledge surrounded by huge and hard rocks of an old and fossilized one. The way people approach and try to investigate such an unconventional subject as UFOs is but one of many examples of it. People's attitude towards Anthroposophy may provide another one, perhaps more appreciable by anthroposophists.

Confronted in this latter case with something totally new which so mercilessly creates a gap in their otherwise complete and accustomed picture of the world people easily fill it up with any of many handy notions at their disposal designating Anthroposophy as a religion, philosophy, teaching, theory, hypothesis, world conception, world-model, etc. All these names are for them a rampart which they build to protect themselves from that very new what Anthroposophy essentially is – the discovery of spiritual facts. Both spiritual facts and their cognition are beyond today's "knowledge" of the world and therefore unacceptable. Though in theory everybody appreciates that progress, including that of our knowledge of the world, is inevitable, unlimited and unpredictable, yet very few would accept anything not going along accustomed lines of thinking or imagination. It is very interesting to note, at least it has been my experience, that even people's doubts or criticism regarding Anthroposophy are of that nature.

Non-acceptance of Anthroposophy would have been in the right area had it been based on the denial of existence of the spiritual worlds or of Steiner's ability to cognize them correctly. But nobody can even hope to do it seriously without first going fully into the subject itself. It is exactly this "going into" which for most people means unacceptable "going beyond," or to use a modern term, "being unscientific." Instead, one does something very habitual and "scientific" by placing Anthroposophy into an appropriate "pigeon-hole" of classified modern knowledge where there is a place for everything and everybody, including those who, from time to time, bestow on mankind new world conceptions (Steiner) and those who tend to be attracted by them (anthroposophists). Perhaps most characteristically a misconception of what Anthroposophy really is was expressed by one "sympathiser" who on having read *Occult Science* said to me, "It's all very interesting, but can it be fully justified that according to Steiner man consists of four bodies?" To that I could only say the following, "I like you very much, but can it be fully justified that according to my observation your body consists of two legs, two arms, one head, etc?"

But how much more difficult it is to discern this fettered attitude in ourselves, to see whether our words "I don't know" open sluices for new and hard-to-gain knowledge or built a fence around knowledge which is old and comfortable.

Equally important it is to understand the real meaning of our words "I want to know." By saying them how far, in fact, are we prepared to go for our knowledge, how deeply to penetrate into things, how hard to work, how much time to spend, what sacrifices to make? Here again we can very soon discover that the space where our wish to know is allowed to be active is not that big, being limited by all sorts of conscious and subconscious "ifs" and "buts." Of course we all want to know, very much so, *but ... if* it wouldn't take too much time or energy ... *if* we wouldn't have to change our life habits or give up too much inner comfort ... etc., etc. In other words, our wish to know is very often accompanied by the simultaneous demand that the realization of this wish should affect our lives no more than, say, reading of a morning paper. "I want to know" – that is what we readily say very often, "I'd like to be informed" – that is what it really means in so many cases.

So by having cast away the two attitudes blocking our way to knowledge, "I don't want to know" and "I do know," we think that we are safely placed on the path of knowledge while in fact we are in their very firm grips. Therefore our first task in a pursuit of knowledge is to be aware and to free ourselves of these two initial obstacles.

We should also be aware of the dangers one might encounter at the very end of one's voyage for knowledge. One of such dangers could be the failure to complete the voyage and reach a destination, i.e. to get an answer one was looking for, to acquire knowledge one was seeking. Hence one's disappointment and frustration, apathy and inactivity – just the opposite of what one would have hoped to achieve by setting off for such a voyage.

It could be still worse if one gets a wrong answer which would put one on a false footing, distorting the true picture of the world and of one's place in it. It is hardly better when one gets a correct answer, but does not know what to do with it, how to use one's new knowledge. But the worst of all is the case when one uses a right answer for wrong ends, when one misuses and abuses one's knowledge.

All these precarious outcomes of one's venture for knowledge can do nothing else but cause damage to the knowledge seeker himself, to people around him and indeed to mankind as a whole. To avoid this he needs a very reliable safeguard which would place and keep him firmly on the road to knowledge, protect him from dangers en route and make the whole endeavour a success. Such a safeguard can only be a *right answer* to the question "Why do I want to know?" which every seeker has to ask and answer himself. That *right answer* would enable him to crave for knowledge and to open himself fully towards it, to benefit from his every effort and to value even small achievements, and finally to distinguish between wrong and right in knowledge and its usage.

But what is then the above *right answer*, how is it achieved or recognised? What should be recognised first, however, is that the question itself "Why do I want to know?" by

its very nature belongs to the category of those fundamental questions which concern the nature of man and his place in the world evolution, the meaning and purpose of this evolution and of life itself. For many all these questions are purely "theoretical," having nothing to do with the realities of everyday life and therefore not worth considering. But those who would not ignore the question about their motives for knowledge would answer it in accordance with their general world outlook acquired in the struggle with other fundamental questions mentioned above.

It is among such answers, which would reflect positive motives for knowledge, that we can hope to find a *right* one. To recognise a right answer as such it is necessary to consider also quite different types of motives, which could be called negative. These play a considerable role in man's life today, yet they are difficult to recognise or admit. The more important it is then to bring them to light and to understand the relations they form with man, on one side, and with objects of his cognition, on the other, and whether these motives bring the two sides together or sunder them apart.

The first negative motive I would call ambition, as it stems from one's injured pride or dissatisfaction with one's position vis-a-vis other people. Very often it is merely a feeling of inadequacy in comparison with other people, and the intent here does not go beyond the wish to be "like others," "not worse than others." It could also be the wish to prove oneself in one's own eyes or in the eyes of others. But not infrequently it means the urge to be better than others, to be above them, to dominate and have power over people. In all these cases we deal with deformed personalities in whom something is either lacking or hypertrophied which they want to compensate or satisfy by external means - by knowledge, in this particular case. Thus knowledge they seek has for them one particular utilitarian value and function which have nothing to do with either the object of knowledge, i.e. the world around and inside us, or our relations with it.

Fear is another motive which prompts people to seek knowledge as everyone knows today that "we are afraid because we don't know," hence "knowledge is the remedy for fear." This seems obvious and can be easily exemplified with most trivial examples. For instance, many people are afraid of darkness because they *do not know* what it contains or conceals. You can frighten such a person to death by locking him in a dark room. But it is enough to turn the light on for him to see the familiar environment and absence of anything "unknown" to make him again a happy and composed person. In another example, one is in a terrible rush and panic because of the fear to be late for a plane - for the very reason that he *does not know* the time. Show him a clock, let him *know* the time - and the fear is gone. It is a very simple and straightforward thing to find out whatever knowledge is necessary and eliminate the fear when you know what and how to do and can actually do it.

The problem becomes more difficult when, say, a person who is afraid of darkness finds himself one night in the middle of the woods, without any switches there or even a torch at hand. Or, in yet another example, those who are afraid of water know perfectly well that their fear would be gone as soon as they could learn to swim. In this case one knows what to do and most probably even how to do it, the only problem being that he just *cannot* do it. In any case, we cannot expect that every situation, event, object or notion which constitutes a fear for us will also supply us with a switch, clock or some other gadget for eliminating that fear. Besides, it is evident that there are many people who in the same situations and under the same circumstances do not feel any fear at all, that very fear that tears others into pieces.

So here again we deal with something essentially individual, internal, which people hope to cure by external means. But there is no such medicine, be it even all knowledge in the world, which can cure illness by treating symptoms rather than causes. To understand the causes which are contained within man, not in objects of his fear, we also need knowledge the motivation for which should come from the former, not from the latter. Then the knowledge attained will not only throw light on both various causes and symptoms signifying man's ordeals but will also help to sustain him.

To the third negative motive I would like to give the name of escapism, which designates a specific phenomenon of our life, i.e. a desire or attempt to escape from it. The escape from life by means of knowledge seems at the first glance to be a contradiction in itself. It is knowledge, so we assume, that brings man into life and in fact has made human life what it essentially is today. One can emphasize here that even in those cases when people like hermits withdraw from life externally to study and purify themselves they in fact draw closer to its spiritual substance thereby facilitating man's life in their own way.

On the other hand, one can also refer to cases when people, judging by their positions, activities and vast knowledge, seem to be in the very midst of life and yet at a closer look appear to be quite aloof from it. Apparently only in the context and dynamics of each particular situation in which an individual is involved it is possible to understand why and how various factors, knowledge among them, stimulate one or another type of our relations with life.

In our lives we are continuously confronted with all sorts of problems, tasks and duties, both of everyday poignant nature and of a less immediate general character. At the same time no less permanent are people's attempts to avoid them. In pursuing these attempts people are as persistent, resourceful, sacrificial and ruthless as they are creative in pursuing their other goals. What is more, and what might seem quite unconceivable at first, is that in their avoidance of what falls to their lot people sometimes choose to do much more difficult and dangerous things, at least externally, than those they try to avoid. Life provides many examples of this phenomenon, which I can probably illustrate best by one dating from my student's life in Russia.

I had a friend who lived with and looked after his elderly and sick mother. The relations between the two were of a type one hardly encounters in modern life but only reads of in old novels. They truly loved, I would even say adored, each other as well as being very good friends who would spend many enjoyable hours together. So the more heart-rending was the scene which appeared before my eyes when I visited them one day. The mother was sitting in her armchair sobbing, her son kneeling in front of her, his face also in tears buried in his mother's lap. The mother's voice was weak and feeble when she turned to me, "Please do something about it ... Please tell him, he'll listen to you ... " It took some time before I could understand the mother's plea: to persuade her son to give up his decision to enrol as a volunteer to be sent for one year to cultivate barren virgin soils in Kazakhstan. Some explanations are needed here. To cultivate vast areas of these soils in terrible climatic conditions instead of improving husbandry in equally vast but very fertile and already cultivated areas in favourable conditions in European Russia was one of Khrushchev's eccentric ideas as how to enhance the Soviet economy. The idea was to be carried out by thousands and thousands of "enthusiasts" who would be prepared to leave their families, homes and jobs to live by dozens in tents in the middle of nowhere with the scorching sun beating down and very little water in summer and terrible cold and wind in winter, to say nothing about other "unfavourable" conditions of life with respect to accommodation, work and leisure. I shall not go into reasons why people did go there. But for my friend, who had almost finished his five year course at the University and had a very bad heart condition, that adventure would mean a spiritual and physical disaster, if not a suicide. But the worst side of it was that he was prepared to leave his adorable and helpless mother, whom he might never have seen again. His decision was incomprehensible by any wit, but I happened to know the reason for it: he wanted to avoid the discomfort of resitting the two exams which he had failed recently. Just think how much he was prepared to sacrifice at the time only because he could not face his present situation, which his decision anyway had not solved at all, but had only postponed for a year, when he in any case would have had to resit his exams but with much lesser chances of passing them.

One can see my friend's decision as a clear-cut act of cowardice if only because in his inability to face a particular life situation he was prepared to sacrifice, along with himself, somebody else. There are however other circumstances when essentially the

same action might appear quite differently. If I may once again use my Russian experience I would like to refer to the movement for human rights, which is now well known in the West. It is remarkable by any standard how a few gallant souls of Russia fight against a gigantic and evil force, sacrificing themselves for goals which are both vital and noble. But I happened to have a chance to see how for some people this movement had provided a refuge from less lofty and public, but equally important, personal battles of everyday life. I also saw how some people had chosen the ordeal of an external strenuous fight and physical sacrifices rather than the burden of an inner search for understanding of the nature of those very evils they had determined to fight.

But the majority of the Russian people today, including its in the past famous, but now notorious, intelligentsia have chosen the opposite direction: being unable and unwilling to see the evils and especially to face, as a result, inevitable internal and external consequences they run away from them all. There are two main escape routes at their disposal – one is the material world with all its temptations and satisfactions, the other is the world of spirit with wide and beautiful alleys of art, religion and science. So knowledge too, while being an armour for some in their life battles, is a hermitage from life for others, who with the help of accumulated learned data are trying to build the Great Wall of Knowledge between themselves and the realities of life. Said one of my Russian friends: "There are many erudite persons today but very few thinkers." It is because thinking leads to activity, to participation in life and in *life battles*.

Obviously every individual fights his own battle, and only on individual merits can it be designated, by nobody else but by the individual himself, as an attack or retreat. But are there any criteria for telling in our very confused and demanding times whether our pursuit of knowledge takes us away from life or brings us into it? One seems appropriate for the times like ours: if in our conscious striving for knowledge a painful inner battle for what we think is good and right is taking place within our souls then we may hope to be heading in the right direction.

It is particularly important for us anthroposophists in the West to remember that the things people find most difficult to face and therefore try most vigorously to avoid are the demands of our time in terms of the concrete deeds and efforts they require. We talk a great deal about these demands but seem to understand them too well or too little to be able to translate them into practical deeds. I know one is treading here on very sensitive ground but I cannot help giving at least two examples of what I mean.

The importance of building a real community of men is widely recognized now, particularly within the Anthroposophical movement. Appropriate books have been published, articles written, lectures given, seminars held, conferences organized, etc., etc. This all being very good it belongs as it is to the domain of "Knowledge." It is from another domain, that of practical deeds, that my first example comes. I once heard two people talking about a small anthroposophical meeting which they had both attended and which had specially concerned itself with building of a real community in our area. "By the way, said one of the two, who was the gentleman sitting next to you?" – "I don't know, the reply was, but who was the lady sitting near the table?" – "Have no idea either." Strangers talking about forming a partnership, let alone a family, would sound ridiculous. But strangers talking about building a community without first exercising it in its most elemental form by being introduced to one another and by getting to know each other - that does not seem to surprise anybody. If we fail to secure the encounter and merger of the aforesaid domains of "Knowledge" and "Deeds" at the lowest level how can we expect it to happen at the highest one? If we remain strangers to each other how can all our meetings, study groups, books, lectures, etc., i.e. all our "Knowledge," produce anything else but a strange community of strangers?

Another demand of our time I want to refer to is the association-relations between producers, consumers and traders which Steiner has pointed to very emphatically as to a focal point of modern economic and social life. Indeed, we can see very clearly now that our social-economic system is failing mainly due to the fact that its participants cannot form right relationships with one another. Our contribution to this failure (if only in terms of

efforts) should be measured against the fact that we have, on the one hand, all the above categories of participants within our movement and, on the other, all necessary guidance for establishing such relationships. Here again one does not speak in terms of big and noisy campaigns or overall achievements but rather of perhaps very small but concrete, practical and *right* deeds for which there has never been a shortage of opportunities.

We, anthroposophists, seem to be particularly addicted to "theoretical knowledge," which in all its grandeur and abundance happens to be so comfortably and invitingly at hand. Rudolf Steiner has opened for us whole new branches of the world knowledge and wisdom hitherto unknown to mankind. Everybody can now open his books and immediately find himself in lands that are wonderful and boundless, virgin for human cognition, divine and yet very real and concrete. How easy the journey and enjoyable the sojourn in such spiritual "package-tours" where everything has been arranged and provided for. But do we always remember that it all has been done *for us* and not *by us*? Do we realize that in the spheres until recently accessible to a few very special individuals only we abide mainly with our words and not with our deeds? Do we ask ourselves what these spheres are for us – a retreat or a workshop, a hermitage or a battle-field? Do we escape or pursue life over there?\*

So none of the negative motives – ambition, fear or escapism – can provide a sound and reliable starting point for cognition. They represent not an inner striving but an inner deficiency. Hence knowledge acquired will either enhance this deficiency or make it less comprehensible to one's consciousness. But one need not be a slave of these negative motives. Instead one can master them and even make them real stimuli for knowledge. For this to happen they should become an object of one's conscious efforts to study and subsequently transform them in the following way:

- *ambition*, into concern, compassion and love for others;
- *fear*, into wonder, confidence and faith towards life and the world;
- *escapism*, into enthusiasm, will and courage to fight life battles.

If untransformed negative motives cannot put us into real healthy relations with knowledge and consequently with the world and life, what then about the motives we have called positive, where do they lead us? These motives, which stem from one's world outlook, would seek knowledge for its own value and fruits as well as for their application. But the answer to the question – "Why do I want to know?" – would inevitably vary, I would say, in accordance with the answer one gives to another fundamental question, "Why do I live?"

Some people feel it is as natural to wish to know and cognize the world as it is natural to live in it. Some even feel an irresistible compulsion for cognition which they might liken to the necessity to breathe. The answer to the question of motives for knowledge could be "religious" – "God has created us as cognizing beings of His world," or "scientific" – "To extend the boundaries of our knowledge of the world so as to further its progress." It can be of a practical nature, "To understand the world and events around us so as to be able to cope with them successfully," or of an altruistic one, "To be able to better help other people."

But here again anthroposophists are in a unique and privileged position because they happen to be the recipients of one of the most wonderful gifts ever given to mankind. That gift is the discovery by Rudolf Steiner of a spiritual fact: that our world, which is the manifestation of gods' thoughts and deeds, *is not complete* without man's cognition of it. The world without thinking, i.e. without cognition and knowledge, is like a plant without blossom. It means that through thinking and cognition man participates in world creation and evolution, he becomes a co-worker of gods, in fact a co-creator of the world.

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\* I put in a footnote something which is, in my opinion, of tremendous importance and implication deserving our most serious concern and study but which is too special a subject to go into here, namely that the *most practical* anthroposophical activities carried out precisely in order to *meet demands* of our time could in fact be nothing else but an escape from these demands and even their betrayal.

The bare thought of it might make one collapse under the burden of the enormous responsibility for one's thoughts and deeds, for one's cognition and knowledge, which if wrong can affect the world creation and evolution in an adverse way. How then can we ever dare open the gates of knowledge, even knock at them, how can we explain our appearance in front of them, how justify our entrance? No wit, resourcefulness or skill in finding an answer to these questions will do here, because of the nature of the answer which is required. It has to be that *right answer* mentioned earlier – man's and indeed the world's safeguard in man's search for knowledge. To give such an answer we can do one thing only – say the plain and simple truth as it stands:-

The course of my life has not been an easy one; there have been many obstacles and cross-roads in it. Every time I met an obstacle I had to fight a battle to overcome it, every time I entered a crossroad I had to make a conscious and painful decision as to which direction to choose. This is how I have been struggling onwards till all my life experiences, all my strivings, aspirations and battles have brought me to these gates. There is no way back for me, no diversion is possible. I can wait here as long as need be but an eventual entrance is a matter of life and death for me.

If we are not in a position to say this then we are strangers in this part of the world. We have lost our way and should try to find it again as soon as possible. But if we *can* say it in all honesty and earnestness, does it signify the end of a very long and difficult journey? Will the above words – *the right answer* – open the gates of knowledge for us? The answer to these questions should definitely be "no" as nobody and nothing in the world can open these gates for us but we ourselves. This job is in no way easier than making the journey, but before setting about it we have to meet yet two more challenges, which can be expressed by the calls very well known to us: Man, know the world! Man, know thyself!

. In fact these calls should always be with us – not in their widest and deepest sense only, not of course as glib slogans and preachings, but as something very concrete and specific in concrete and specific situations. For one standing before the gates of knowledge and wishing to open them they mean the following: Know the way the gates can be opened! Know thy ability to open them! These calls can be answered only if the gates one is facing are the next step in one's world cognition, if all necessary preceding steps have been made so that there are no gaps in the initial knowledge, or attempts to overjump.

Then the call "Know the world"! would refer to the level of knowledge which enables one to have such a comprehensive picture of the world in general and of a specific part of it as to know where one's quest belongs and by what means it can be reached. Without this knowledge, which has to be specific and individual in every particular case, one can be easily muddled. up and lost in this very complicated, ever changing and enigmatic world of ours. As everything in life which is real, the need for such knowledge can also be illustrated by even a very unsophisticated example.

Suppose a group of people with different levels of consciousness or, shall we say, belonging to different stages of the world evolution, are sitting in front of a screen on which a beam of light passing through a prism is projected. How would they understand the spectrum? There would be someone who would regard the spectrum as a physical object and try to snatch it from the screen. There would be another, not so naive, who would treat the spectrum as a painting and try to scrape it off the screen. Yet another one on having seen the unsuccessful attempt by his fellowmen might come to the conclusion that the spectrum is a part of the screen's texture. Between these three and the first man who would be able to understand that the source of the spectrum belongs not to the screen but elsewhere lies a gap of millennia, of a complete transformation of consciousness. We can extrapolate further and go through various stages of understanding of what a prism, a light decomposition, etc. are, till we finally arrive at a spiritual conception of the spectrum. Now we can appreciate how human consciousness can produce the whole range of different levels in understanding of even one tiny phenomenon in the world. The same happens in actual life when the difference in people's levels of knowledge and comprehension in

facing the same phenomenon results in a whole range of difference conceptions. Only those who "know the world" can hope, by avoiding any misconceptions, to arrive at a right conception.

There is another more straightforward and humorous and therefore perhaps more telling example. In a lunatic asylum a man is sitting on the edge of his bed holding a fishing rod over an empty tub placed in front of him down on the floor. His room-mate, who has been standing nearby for a few hours watching the scene, asks him finally, "What do you think you are doing?" – "Don't you see?," the man answers, "Fishing-, of course." – "My! Now I see why they keep you here," the other man says contemptuously, "Don't you know that you aren't going to get any fish from the tub without first pouring some water in it?" – Now do these two people not represent the mankind today when, with regard to the world cognition the majority is fishing in empty tubs while others, more "clever" ones, with a contemptuous and triumphant air about them, are trying to catch some fish from tubs filled with water? For those who are absolutely sure that *they* know how to fish in the modern world, or at least where the nearest fishmonger is, there is yet one more story, to be sure, a Jewish one this time.

A young man comes to a Rabbi and asks to explain to him what the Talmud\* is. The Rabbi says, "Perhaps, young man, I can better answer your question by giving you an example. Suppose there is a chimney, and two men get out of it, one dirty and the other clean. Who do you think is going to take a bath?" – "The dirty one of course," the young man answers. "It's what you think," the Rabbi says, "But in reality the things are different: the dirty man looks at the other, sees that he is clean and thinks that he is also clean. While the clean man looks at the dirty one and thinking that he himself is also dirty goes to take a bath." – "I see," the bewildered young man says, "Now I understand what the Talmud is." – "Oh, no-no," the Rabbi replies, "'It's not the Talmud yet. I'll give you another example. Suppose there is a chimney, and two men, one dirty and the other clean, get out of it. Who is going to take a bath?" – "I know," the young man says hastily, "The dirty looks at the clean and thinks that he is clean, but the clean looks at the dirty and thinking that he is dirty goes to take a bath." – "Possible," the Rabbi says, "But suppose they've got a mirror. Then they look in it and the clean sees that he is clean, while the dirty seeing that he is dirty goes to take a bath." – "Ah, now I do see what the ...," the young man starts enthusiastically, but the Rabbi interrupts him, "It isn't the Talmud yet. But tell me, young man, where have you seen such a chimney that when two men emerge from it one of them is dirty and the other is clean? That's what the Talmud is."

That's what the world is for so many people who look for their knowledge in chimneys which shoot at them with thick puffs of contradictory and stupefying facts. To *know the world* surely means to be able to at least distinguish between poisonous chimneys of diabolic deceptions and clear springs of real knowledge.

Equally important for opening the gates of knowledge, for making the next step in world cognition is the need to *know oneself*, i.e. one's ability to make this step. Yet the need for this knowledge seems much less obvious, even far-fetched, as for so many the whole issue is that pudding the proof of which is in eating it. Instead of conducting theoretical investigations in one's abilities, some people argue very soundly, would it not be much better and more fruitful to try them in a concrete and real situation? This argument reminds me of yet another Jewish joke. "Can you play the violin?" one man was asked. "I don't know," he replied, "I've never tried." Indeed, he could very well be another Menuhin, but how can he tell without trying it first? So why not let him play a violin – straight off a Stradivarius for the best test? The only snag is that if the poor fellow *does not know* how to play the violin he might very well start drumming it with a bow or even the other way round. Thank God, there are not many people around, who without real knowledge would dare exercise various skills, whether it is violin playing, watch repair, car driving or such-like - for the very reason that they would cause damage and make

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\* A book of Jewish wisdom consisting of many volumes of commentaries, explanations and debates concerning Jewish laws.

themselves ridiculous. Then why do so many people not feel the same responsibility for cognition? Surely it requires at least not less ability than, say, the repair of a toaster.

At this point of my talk to the friends I was reminded by one of them of a story about a centipede who would not walk because it could not decide which leg to move first – a devastating effect of one's attempt to "know oneself and the world" before actually acting in it. I was, and am, very grateful for this example as it brings us just to the very heart of the whole issue of knowledge and cognition today.

The fact that the centipede could happily walk around before taking upon itself the responsibility for this activity – and then getting stuck – does not mean that for it to walk no knowledge is needed or that there was no knowledge behind the centipede's unconscious movements. There most definitely was knowledge, though not centipede's, very primitive and limited kind of knowledge, but another, very high and sophisticated kind. When centipede made an attempt to substitute the former for the latter, no wonder it got stuck.

Man is today in exactly the same situation. For millennia he lived by the grace of Higher Knowledge. Now the time has come for him to take over from the Gods. This taking over is a very slow, complicated and *dangerous* process. But it has already started; man has started thinking for himself; that is why we as individuals and mankind as a whole stumble and get stuck in so many areas.

There are areas, like for instance the digestive system, where the takeover is yet unthinkable ("non-negotiable," if we are to use a current political term). On the other hand, some other areas of life already can, and in fact should, be based on man's *responsible* knowledge. I emphasize the word responsible, because it is *responsibility* and *responsibility* again that we ignore today, particularly in regard to knowledge. In the above example a responsible centipede should have said to whoever told it to walk, "Sorry, I can't be responsible for my movements. I haven't got the necessary knowledge for the conscious use of my legs, nor am I ready to receive it." Centipede cannot say it, but man can. He can and should assess his own ability and responsibility and say no to his even most sincere craving for first-hand knowledge of whatever phenomenon pertaining to cosmic or human existence if this knowledge is beyond his reach yet. On the contrary, if man has approached his quest closely enough so that he can get his teeth into it, can wrestle with it as Jacob did with someone at Peniel, then his responsibility is to wrestle *until the breaking of the day* and to *prevail against* it.

This brings us of course to yet another chapter in the never-ending book of life, which we do not propose to enter here. But if someone intends to enter or has already entered it he would be much better equipped for his tasks if, in my opinion, before setting his foot on the path of knowledge, or even after, he can sincerely ask and truthfully answer in the affirmative the following questions:

- Do I really mean I don't know?
- Do I really mean I want to know?
- Am I aware of the dangers on the path of knowledge and am I determined to do everything I can to avoid them?
- Is seeking of knowledge a matter of life and death for me?
- Do I know how to attain the knowledge I am seeking?
- Am I capable of attaining it?

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At this point I ended my contribution to the UFO group. I wanted to share with the members, as I share now with the readers, not only my final findings, but also the way which had led me to them. I want other people to participate in my thought-process so that they can consciously identify themselves with or dissociate themselves from some of my premises and conclusions or substitute them with their own. My personal confrontation with my findings, which stand before me as challenges, made it obvious to me that my interest in UFOs was not deep and serious enough so as to constitute an object of my

special studies at this stage. By presenting them to the group I had hoped both to help others to understand better their relations with the subject, and to make more clear for myself those aspects which can only come to full light when discussed with other people. However, the group chose not to discuss my challenges and to carry on with the subject of UFOs. I found it quite justified from the point of view of those members who after all had come together to discuss UFOs and not one's motives for knowledge.

However, I have always felt that a lecturer and listeners, or a writer and readers, enter into some kind of mutual relationship and responsibility. Not only when a contribution has been invited, as in my case with the UFO group, but also when it comes to readers out of the blue as it were, like this paper. I feel it is mainly my responsibility for "opening" of a relationship, but also of those who happened to have entered into it. Therefore both "parties" should be conscious of the contributions they can make towards this relationship and through it towards the spiritual life of which this relationship is an integral part.

On my part I do not want to produce yet another package of "knowledge", however relevant and interesting it might be. Besides, I think it is comparatively easy to say something which might seem of importance and interest. Even to translate sublime and lofty precepts and principles into everyday language is, after all, not that difficult. One can also become quite skilful in deriving from these principles some practical tasks for others to perform. It has never been my intention to do anything like that, if only because we have got enough of this all, as well as of other knowledge, to digest for the rest of our lives.

The problem is that the abundance of knowledge makes us unreceptive to it. We have got so much on our plates that we cannot swallow and digest it. When we happen to have a piece of knowledge in our mouths we munch it for a while and then push it out to make room for another bit. It is how we go to lectures, partake in study-groups, read books, etc. – their nourishing content does not go into our metabolic and digestive system, does not impel our will, does not make us work. This is actually why we can go from one activity to another with such ease. *Knowledge does not inspire us to action*, in fact, it paralyses our will. One of the reasons it happens is that we cannot cope with its enormous vastness and might, and with the burden of the demands it places on our shoulders. This is also one of the serious problems facing the West today – and a marvelous opportunity for anthroposophists to make their contributions towards solving it.

Would it be too much on my part to see this article as an attempt to make such a contribution? I present the content of this article not as some abstract "knowledge" with which one can agree or disagree and leave it there, but as a real problem of life. Had it not been written and published and read by others it would have remained my own problem. But the moment someone happens to have read it, the problem immediately becomes his too. Thus it becomes *our* problem. Whether we can solve it as such, individually or collectively, remains to be seen.

## II

Dear Friend,

I am writing to you and some other friends to share some thoughts which might be of your concern too and which you might wish to pursue.

As anthroposophists we aspire to live and work out of Anthroposophy and are concerned that it should not just remain a body of knowledge aloof from realities of life. Some of us work in anthroposophical ventures, others undertake various anthroposophical initiatives or participate in them; there are also other forms and ways in which people are trying to pursue their anthroposophical ideals.

However difficult such tasks are, still more difficult but not less important it is to bring Anthroposophy to bear not only on what we ourselves initiate or consciously choose, but also on what happens in life as something independent of or even unwanted by us. By this I mean various events of whatever nature - international, national, anthroposophical, personal, etc. What I find most invariably happens here is this. When we try to apply

Anthroposophy to understand and explain these events we usually don't go beyond generalities. But for more specific and concrete comprehension we often have recourse to an ordinary mode of thinking and judgement thus confining Anthroposophy to "anthroposophical" spheres.

In this connection I would like to examine some different and concrete current events, so as to see whether such an approach can bring a real comprehension of them. I would also like to pose a question, How can we achieve, through Anthroposophy, a real comprehension of what is happening in the world today?

If this is of interest to you perhaps you'll let me know and I will arrange a meeting ...

This was the letter I sent some time ago to some friends in Forest Row. Subsequently, as a result of their response, we had a meeting at which I made my presentation as indicated in the letter. What follows is a written and enlarged version of this presentation.

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May I first of all welcome you all here and express my gratitude for your positive response to my invitation. I especially appreciate it as it was not absolutely clear from my letter what exactly was going to happen at our meeting. Some of you tried to clarify it with me, some even responded by writing to me. I am sorry I could not be more specific at the time. My intention and letter were prompted by some "fireside" conversations and general observations, and only after your response did it become possible for me to think more specifically about my presentation.

I hope my overall intention will become quite clear to you by the end of my presentation. What I would like to make quite clear now, however, is what I expect and what I do not expect of you tonight.

As you have no idea of what I am going to say and in this respect have come to the meeting, unlike myself, unprepared, it would be unfair and unreasonable on my part to expect from you any immediate reaction or a discussion unless you yourselves would like to respond in this way. Therefore you should be under no obligation or pressure to respond outwardly, and my only request to you is to lend me your ears and attention.

I think you would be able to understand better what I have to say tonight if I do not plunge into it straightaway but give you first some background against which the main subject will be seen much more clearly. For this I have chosen a number of personal experiences, the first of which, a conversation, goes some seventeen years back, to Russia, where I lived at the time.

Strictly speaking it was not a conversation. It was rather an interrogation at the KGB (Russian Secret Police) headquarters. To look more human and to achieve better results some of the interrogators used to clothe their investigations in the form of a conversation or even a dialogue. I was particularly annoyed with one of them who kept accusing me and my friends of all sorts of 'anti' and subversive activities. All our thoughts were about the country and its people and their future. We wanted to build, not to destroy. So once, to prove my point, I reacted to one of the interrogator's attacks with a spontaneous question, "What do you think we would do if we came to power?" His answer was also spontaneous and to the point (his point). He answered with a Russian proverb an English equivalent of which goes like the following: "God sends a curst cow short horns." Meaning, because you are what you are you will never have power to do what you want (it proved to be very prophetic indeed!).

Later at home I cast my mind back to this conversation wondering why I had asked that particular question. For some reason I kept returning to it again and again till one day I asked it again, this time addressing myself: What indeed would I do if I came to power? This time it was not a spontaneous or idle question, and it did not come from someone prone to fantasies or speculations. I asked this question consciously and in earnest, as a person who felt himself to be on the frontline of a real battle (though my weapons were

spiritual). I based my search for an answer on my knowledge of the country and people and of the concrete and real conditions which prevailed at the time.

The more I thought about the question the more uneasy and uncomfortable I felt about a possible answer till I finally arrived at one which was quite startling: There was nothing whatsoever I, or anybody else for that matter, could do to change the general situation in Russia. This conclusion seemed particularly surprising if one thought of many wrongs, evils and vices of contemporary Russia which were unbearable and had to be dealt with as soon as possible. It was still more difficult for me to be reconciled with my conclusion because with respect to my immediate life situation I arrived at quite a different one. Here I saw wrongs and evils face to face as it were, at my own level and in their concrete and specific manifestations. I could recognize them as such, could see how one could deal with them and in fact did do in this respect as much as I could in the circumstances.

But the situation looked quite different if I viewed it not from my own vantage point of an ordinary citizen, but from that of a "prime minister", as it were. From the latter I could not see how the things could be changed in a global sense, I could not discern those forces which could bring about the change in the general situation or were even interested in this change taking place. It was rather ironical and paradoxical that at the very bottom of the state power-structure I had an understanding and ability to act while at the very top of it I was absolutely powerless even in my mind. And it was only later that I learnt to see, through Anthroposophy, what was invisible and indiscernible at first. □

But I learnt something else, too, which was not particularly new but was very valuable as it came to me as a direct life experience rather than a theoretical knowledge. Firstly, the same problem does not look the same in different life situations and from different levels of existence. At each of them it might require a quite different understanding and solution. Secondly, for better understanding of life one should aspire to understand its problems at two levels of existence – one's own and in a more general, even global sense. Thirdly, in order to be able not only to observe and cognize life but also to act in it on this basis of a full understanding of it one should try to build a bridge between the two levels of understanding, specific and general; so that they should form in one's consciousness what they are in reality – unity, oneness.

We can recognize the value of this "trinity" in life if we look around ourselves and observe how good some people are at grasping what is happening in their immediate environment but are absolutely lost when faced with more general problems. Others seem to be quite at home in their dealings with problems in general but are helpless in tackling them at an everyday life level. There are also those who can reach understanding at both levels but in such a way that these levels never meet, as if they belong to different forms of existence. Or we can look within ourselves and see how in respect to different problems we find ourselves in one of the three situations. While in fact we should aspire for the fourth one where a fullness and oneness of comprehension is achieved. This is one experience and thought I wanted to share with you as a background for my presentation.

The other I can illustrate by two episodes from my English life. A few years ago I was involved in a controversy over some issues, both anthroposophical and general. Another person who was also involved in it sent me a lengthy and candid letter stating his agreement and disagreement with me and ending it with the following P.S.: "Do our different approaches stem from the fact that you have a study – I have a workshop!" I had every reason to appreciate this letter, first of all for its frankness – it is not often that people in this country tell you what they think of you. Also I found the above remark very valuable. Never being a "bookworm" myself and in any case never considering man's occupation responsible for the rightness or wrongness of his ideas, I nevertheless thought that this person's observation could be true and therefore very helpful to me. I knew from my Russian experiences where people, especially your friends, never hesitate to speak the truth boldly to your face, how painful and at the same time helpful this truth could be, particularly if based on an insight. So I went to the person, thanked him for his letter and

asked him to help me by making his remark a little bit more specific. The only thing I managed to get from him this time were ... his apologies. This is an Englishman for you!

In the other episode a non-Englishman was involved. He was one of those who personally responded to John Gordon and myself when we announced our intention to publish the Forum for the Anthroposophical Community. His first impression of our intention was that we were inspired by the two Adversaries – John, representing the West, by Ahriman, and I, representing the East, by Lucifer. Though the person has since changed his attitude towards our initiative I found his original remark also very valuable. We know that both beings are working in the world and in each of us. It is no good ignoring this work or failing to recognize it. Quite the contrary, only through identifying it in the most concrete and precise way can we ever hope to combat it. Though the identification of this work within oneself, as well as of one's own wrong inspirations and ideas, is a matter for each individual concerned, this is where others could be very helpful. But one cannot be really helpful here by merely passing general and uncaring, though correct, remarks. One should be both specific about the issue and concerned for a person, i.e. wishing to help rather than criticize. Though this type of help is most difficult for people in this country to give it is badly needed here. This is the other experience and thought I wanted to share with you before embarking on my main subject.

I said in my letter to you that "I would like to examine some different and concrete events." When choosing them for my examination I was at first tempted to choose events either from my personal experiences, like in the above examples, or of my particular concern, like Michael Hall School and education, for example. But by doing so I would have failed to meet the very challenge to which I also referred in my letter as being a difficult and important task of understanding what is happening outside the sphere of our immediate activity. Besides, if we always stay within the sphere of our own interest only, what chance is there in the world for mutual understanding and co-operation? So I decided to examine events not of my direct involvement and special interest but rather those I encountered by chance or which are at present outside the mainstream of my life.

My first examination is connected with the question of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament. Neither my current concern with this problem, nor its own scope, make it possible for me to consider it in its totality and in sufficient depth. I would rather consider two specific manifestations of this problem, which in the form of two articles in the national press recently came my way.

The first one was not exactly an article. It was the Bronowski Memorial lecture delivered by Dr. N. Humphrey and broadcast on BBC-2 on the 23rd of October 1981. It was subsequently published in *The Listener* on the 29th of October under the title *Four Minutes to Midnight*. For those who have not heard or read it I shall give the gist of it using the quotations highlighted by *The Listener*.

Dr. Humphrey begins by talking about the horror of nuclear weapons and about people's attitudes towards them saying that "we behave as though we have been hexed by the Bomb – put under a spell." "How can we stand by and do nothing to prevent the destruction of our world?" – he asks then. Analysing various reasons for such behaviour, he states that "the Bomb is not an uncontrollable automaton, and we are not uncontrollable people." Therefore, he concludes, we can and must act to stop the Bomb and prevent the destruction of our world.

The second article, called *Better Red than Dead is Not Good Enough*, was written by a prominent Russian dissident, Vladimir Bukovsky, and published in *The Times* on the 4th of December 1981. The essence of the article is as follows:

Bukovsky sees the current peace movement in Western Europe as being a product of "the paralysing fear" and "incredible naivety" of its participants, on the one hand, and of Soviet propaganda on the other, by which "mature and responsible people have fallen into the Soviet booby-traps in their thousands." As a result, "the universal craving for peace at any price has rendered people illogical, irrational, unable to think calmly. Their arguments, if one may call them so, are so childish, senseless, selfish, that an involuntary smile comes

to one's lips. Any intelligent discussion is impossible with them, because at best they would parrot out the old, mouldy Soviet slogans and cliches which even school children in the Soviet Union would laugh at." This campaign, as all other similar campaigns, has been orchestrated by and from the Soviet Union, Bukovsky says, and concludes: "In Communist Party jargon there is such a term as a 'useful idiot'. Now, despite all their blunders, adventures, economic disasters, the Polish crisis and stubborn Afghan peasants, Reagan's rearmament plans and UN resolutions, the Soviet rulers have scored a spectacular victory: they have recruited millions of useful idiots to implement their bankrupt foreign policy."

Having read both articles I decided to analyse them through "the experience of slow reading" as my very wise anthroposophical friend in Russia used to say. I wanted to try and go beyond the written words and penetrate into the thoughts behind them, which sometimes can tell us much more than the words or even than the authors themselves intended to or could say.

Here again the temptation was to concentrate on Bukovsky's article. After all, it came from the same background as my own. Its images, references and style, the whole mentality behind it, was familiar, which made my task much easier. But that was exactly the reason why I rejected this possibility in the end. I thought it was your task, people in the West, to try to understand and penetrate into what has come from the East, while my task should be to tackle something coming from the West as less familiar and accessible and more difficult.

Difficult indeed the Humphrey's lecture was. Language apart, its images, references and examples almost all came from a background totally different from mine. The experiences were different, the cultures were different. The fact that I live now in this country did help but in no way relieved me from the task of fighting my way through a "foreign territory." Though difficult, it was a very rewarding work, the results of which I am going to share with you now.

Having seen and read the lecture very carefully I find both the lecturer and the lecture quite remarkable. Without knowing him personally, Or. Humphrey comes through as a very special individual indeed. In fact, to me he personifies those individuals who, as Dr. Bronowski himself, in a certain respect can be seen as the best representatives of our time and civilization. The same goes for the lecture. What is more, both the lecturer and the lecture represent not only the best but also something rather characteristic of our time. It is exactly because of this dual representation that I also see Dr. Humphrey as a tragic figure and his lecture as a tragic document, both being tragic signs of our time. I shall try and explain.

It is not only as a psychologist and scientist that Humphrey asks why in the face of the Bomb we behave like "the victims of hypnotism, like men in a dream, like lemmings heading for the sea." He asks this question primarily as a human being who feels responsible for the fate of mankind. And in his pursuit of the question he goes beyond just scientific answers and reaches the areas no scientific methods or instruments can open for man today. There he finds his answer: "Nuclear weapons are not *comprehensible*: neither you nor I have any hope of understanding just what they are and what they do. In saying that, I mean to belittle none of us: it is almost a compliment. For I do not see how any human being whose intelligence and sensitivities have been shaped by traditional facts and values could possibly understand the nature of these unnatural, other-worldly weapons. So-called facts about the Bomb are not facts in the ordinary sense at all: they are not facts we can relate to, get our minds round. Mere numbers, words ... It is not just that I cannot bear the thought; I cannot even *have* the thought (of nuclear weapons) ... Our minds are minds finely tuned by culture and by evolution to response to the frequencies of the real world. And when a message comes through on an alien wavelength it sets up no vibrations. The so-called facts pass clean through us and away, like radio emissions from the stars."

I find this answer, this explanation, this insight into the nature of the problem absolutely remarkable. Of course it is incomprehensible to our ordinary minds, because it

is an *otherworldly problem*. It is only its horrendous effects and manifestations, like Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that are visible to us; but not their origin and nature, which we cannot see and which, I would say, we are prevented from seeing. So it makes it particularly remarkable that Dr. Humphrey managed to penetrate the barrier and recognize an other-worldly, spiritual nature of the problem which tormented him.

I think it is very important, that we, anthroposophists, should not overlook or underestimate such an extraordinary achievement, which might prove difficult for some of us to appreciate fully. Whatever we say, write and do within our community is inseparably linked with the spiritual world. For us it is a reality with which and according to which we are trying to live. And yet we should not forget that this reality was discovered and conquered for us by Rudolf Steiner so that now, with his help, we could learn to accommodate ourselves within it.

It is something altogether different for people like Dr. Humphrey. Deeply engrossed in this world and hampered by its knowledge while unaided by any knowledge of the other world, he made, by virtue of his soul qualities and some intuition, a tremendous leap transcending this world and coming to the very border which separates it from the other.

I visualized him in my mind standing at the threshold, his outstretched hands just touching the world of spirit. Having reached that far and heading in a right direction, where would he go now? With great excitement and concern I was following the lecture, waiting, with hope and expectation, for his next step.

He made it – and my excitement and hope turned into grief and lament. For something tragic happened here, not for Humphrey alone but, symbolically, for the world which he represents. His intuitive encounter with the spiritual world, instead of sharpening his vision and alerting his mind, blinded and dulled him. What is more, the blindness is incurable and the dullness irreversible. These are the words with which Humphrey describes his own mental state which, according to him, is shared by each and everyone of us: "Each of us is aboriginally blind. We must live with this blindness. It will not change. I do not expect my dog to learn to read *The Times*, and I do not expect myself or any other human being to learn the meaning of nuclear war, or to speak rationally about megadeaths or megatonnes of TNT. The most we can ask for is an open recognition that neither we, when we protest against nuclear armaments, nor the generals and the politicians when they defend them, know what we are talking about."

This symbolically signifies the tragic situation in which our materialistic civilization finds itself. It can offer nothing even to its best children to enable them to gain a true comprehension of the world in which they live. The best they can achieve is to reach the limits set up by this very civilization. But they cannot and will not look beyond these limits because there is no existence for them over there – just an abyss, emptiness, and darkness. Those few who do dare look beyond become blind, dull and frightened. In all fairness and sympathy with them we must say that it is their misfortune rather than their fault, for the borders are guarded very strictly indeed. As I visualized Dr. Humphrey reaching the border I could also visualize how he was halted there and told: "Stop! That's enough! You've gone too far and seen too much! You won't any more! Turn back!"

And back he went – to nowhere, blinded and perplexed, and with him and behind him all those he had ventured to lead out of the world disaster. Whatever his losses Dr. Humphrey still retained those marvellous qualities of honesty and integrity which allowed him to see truthfully his own tragic and helpless situation and to make the following frank statement about it: "If we ourselves do not have a solution, or if we are not prepared to dedicate our lives to finding one, then it is not only other people but our own consciences which will tell us to shut up. There is no honour whatever in being a *helpless* prophet - all dressed up with protest and nowhere to go."

Of course there is no honour in this status, but it was not honour that Dr. Humphrey was seeking. He wanted to help other people, the whole of mankind, out of a disastrous and helpless situation. Therefore when he found himself in a helpless situation he could not follow the advice of his own conscience and shut up. How could he give up his efforts to save the world, what would be an alternative? There was no alternative but to find a

solution, *any* solution. And he found one which again had this duality of being both courageous and tragic, of being right and wrong at the same time.

If the Bomb has this paralysing effect on people, rendering them apathetic and inactive, then there is only one way out of its spell through activity, through people's actions. That was Humphrey's solution, and here he was absolutely right. But what activity did he suggest? Well, he knows only one type of activity which could be powerful in *this* world, and that is physical activity. Whatever he suggested lay in the nature of this activity, which made his solution once again hopeless and tragic both for himself and for the world. Because how can a *helpless and blind prophet without a solution* show the way to others? What sort of activity can come from those others who are blind and perplexed? Verily, the blind guide the blind.

Activity it must be indeed but *spiritual activity – thinking*. It IS through thinking which *is* spiritual activity, and not an imitation of it, that an understanding can be gained and a solution found for the nuclear problem, as well as for many other problems of today. Then we would be able to speak clearly and rationally even about the most complicated and diabolic of them. And then, on the basis of our understanding, we would be able to act *physically*. For the physical world in which we live requires our physical activity, but not before, and most definitely not instead of, our spiritual activity.

But it is true thinking that we cannot find in Dr. Humphrey's distinguished lecture. Many sincere and right words, acute observations, deep insights and some remarkable thoughts are there indeed, but not thinking as spiritual activity. In this sense the lecture is a reflection of the general situation in the world today, or rather in the Western World, whose present task it is to lead mankind in its evolution. This it cannot do any more, Dr. Humphrey's lecture being but one telling example of it. Nor can it relinquish its task and remain just a *helpless* prophet – our time would not allow even this dishonoured privilege. If it does not start thinking it will become a *helpless* destroyer, of itself and the rest of the world. Therefore to start to think is both the task and solution for this world of ours with its manifold problems.

If we turn now to Bukovsky's article we shall see how remarkably it bears on this spiritual situation in the world. Whatever the subject of the article and author's intention, whatever statements he makes and actual words he uses, subconsciously or unconsciously he is dealing with this problem of thinking, or rather with a lack of thinking in the West. Bukovsky might very well speak about the naivety and irrationality of the Western people recruited, in the form of a peace movement, by a "huge brainless ante-deluvian reptile with a fixed set of reflexes", to serve its purposes. But his true message as that of a Russian to the West, though unconscious and unintentional, is in effect this: You, people in the West, why are you so illogical, irrational and unable to think when it comes to vital issues of today? When will you stop- being puppets or useful idiots in the hands of others serving their adversary purposes? Do start thinking, for true thinking is your task and contribution to the world evolution. Our task in the East is different; we are not ready for it yet. But by failing yours, you let down not only yourselves but also us and the whole mankind."

This is, if you want, a plea, a rebuke and admonition which comes to the West from and through the East. It does not come very often, especially in a clear and straightforward way. But on whether it will be heard, understood and responded to depends, I think, the future of us all. □

We might very well know from our studies that mankind has reached at present an impasse in its spiritual and social development. Dr. Humphrey's lecture is but one telling example of this. If we look around closely enough we shall see the signs of it everywhere. We also know from our studies that as the old is dying the new is coming, and as there are signs of decay there also should be signs or seeds of the new around us. To find this new in its physical form in which it ultimately manifests and establishes itself was my problem in Russia many years ago, of which I spoke earlier. But I think finding the new and working with it, apart from creating it out of oneself, is everyone's task anywhere.

It is a difficult task because one seldom has definite guidance as to where to look for it and how to recognize it. But sometimes one is helped, as I was recently, by an event which was pointed out to me as a sign of the new. It was the emergence of a new political party, the SDP, with which many people, including some anthroposophists, connected their hopes for a change of our stale and stagnating socio-political system into something new and better, perhaps even into a threefold structured society.

Are these hopes justified? To answer this one should first understand the nature of the SDP. A note I found in my pigeon hole at the college read: "The SDP – A Marxist Analysis: What is the SDP? What is its social basis? Whose interests does it represent? How is its extraordinary success to be explained? How will it affect the future of British politics? These are questions to which socialists urgently need answers." I think we, anthroposophists, also need answers about the SDP, though perhaps our questions would be different. Mine were, anyway, when I decided to analyse this new phenomenon.

I thought I would understand this phenomenon better if I first formed a broader picture of it by trying to understand what a political party – any political party – is today. If a common element could be found pertaining to the existence of any of them regardless of ideology then it could serve as a key to understanding the true nature of a political party. I did indeed find one such element though there are surely more than just one. This element is an appeal for unity one can invariably hear at various party meetings, conventions, congresses and rallies throughout the world. In this appeal we again come across something right and positive on the one hand, and something wrong and harmful on the other.

Unity of people, brotherhood of men, has been one of the most cherished human ideals for many generations. Many people in different countries and at different times have aspired to this ideal with their best thoughts and deeds. To realize it in our time is much more vital than ever before because today it means survival, as is evident even from our present examination. Therefore any appeal for unity from any quarter should be welcomed and encouraged provided it is in the spirit of the above ideal.

Alas, party appeals have very little to do with this spirit. They do indeed call on their members to unite but on what basis? Parties are trying to unite their members on the basis of their programmes and manifestos, which at best reflect but a part of a human being rather than the totality of man. Uniting people on what is but a part of their nature is far from creating their brotherhood. It rather means tearing them out of the humanity and mankind to which each of us belongs. Not uniting people within mankind but dividing and alienating them – that is what political parties are doing today, that is the true nature of their destructive work in our society.

There is a hopeful side of this destructive work, though – it is self-destructive. Political parties are trying to unite their members on those partial elements which cannot constitute a reliable basis for the true and lasting unity of even a limited number of people. The issues around which parties are formed are, by their very nature, in the process of continuous change, diversion, differentiation, progression, disappearance and emergence. The same goes for the views people hold on these issues. An increasing individualization of human beings results in a variety of different views on each issue, while the ever increasing complexity of our life produces an incomprehensible variety of issues.

No structure or institution within our society is capable of dealing with this very complex situation. Least of all the party/political system. The only thing it can do is to try to harness individual spirits into a "collective view" by putting on people the straitjackets of its programmes and manifestos. But it is an absurd and doomed attempt because it is counter-evolutionary. We only have to look at this newly-born political baby – the SDP. In its early days of a happy infancy, without a programme and a leader yet, when voting on some issues took place in Parliament it demonstrated the same inevitable pattern - some of its members voted "for," some "against" and some abstained. If people want to continue to drag their party system through the present stage of evolution they will inevitably end up with as many parties as there are human beings - each consisting of one person and boasting of its perfect unity.

This is the direction our political system is heading towards – a total disintegration and chaos. It is not conscious of this process, but probably feels it unconsciously and resists it with all its might. But nothing will help because it is the only direction this system can go. So the emergence of the SDP being a result of the division within other parties is a part of this process. As a right step in a right direction this event deserves our blessings, but it can not really mean anything more than new convulsions of the old and dying system. The SDP might very well change the face of British politics, as some commentators predict, but it will never give birth to the new consciousness which is needed for a transformation of our society and for the threefold ideas establishing themselves in life.

Where then can this new consciousness come from or perhaps already be found? I am not talking in this context about individuals, for an individual with particular consciousness might emerge in any, even the most unfavourable, social and spiritual environment. I am talking here precisely about such environment, movements, organisations, communities, centres, etc. as are favourable for the development of new consciousness, or still better, bear its seeds within themselves. A political party is not the only place to look for new consciousness, there are surely many others. But I think it would be only natural if we now turn our inquiring eyes to what we know best and to just where seeds of new consciousness have been planted – to the Anthroposophical Movement.

People's consciousness, especially social consciousness, ultimately finds its expression in their deeds and words. This is where it could be best recognized and should be looked for. In this respect quite a few things have been happening recently in our movement – books and articles have been published, lectures and conferences held, various ventures started and initiatives undertaken. Whether more or something else could be done, as some might suggest, is a matter of speculation while the actual events bear witness to people's increased concern for the social question and to their basically genuine intentions. However, as in other spheres of life, one should go beyond just people's intentions in order to understand what consciousness is really there behind them. Before I go into something concrete may I very briefly give my own exposition of the essence of threefoldness as I see it, just to be sure that we are talking about the same thing.

Man's needs in modern society are threefold: material, spiritual and legal. To be adequately satisfied they have to be met on different principles and in three different spheres of man's activities in society. The first, the economic sphere, deals with the production and provision of all goods, from food and clothes to planes and musical instruments. Here the principle of co-operation, of brotherhood should reign. In the second, the cultural sphere, man satisfies his individual spiritual needs – religious, artistic, educational, scientific, etc. Here unlimited individual freedom is the main principle. In the third, the legal/political sphere, relations between people are regulated through law and other arrangements. Here the main principle is equality. It is not the whole society only, but almost every life situation too, which is a meeting place of these needs of man. Therefore they have to be met on the above principles not in the framework of the whole society only, but also in each such situation. This can only happen if the threefold ideas, before establishing themselves in society, first permeate the individual consciousness of its members.

And coming back now to our movement, I have to say that in my opinion there is very little real and living understanding of the threefold social ideas, let alone them becoming a part of one's nature. There is no shortage of examples which I could easily use as illustrations. I realise, however, that some difficulty or even controversy might arise here both from my choice of examples and from their interpretation. This cannot be helped when examples themselves are the issue, which is not the case here. To make my point as clear as possible I have decided to examine an event very insignificant in itself and lying outside any threefold endeavour. It was brought to my attention by chance; I myself took no part in it and hardly know the names of the participants. In fact, even their participation was accidental, and what matters here is the issue itself rather than particular individuals.

The event took place last summer at the anthroposophical annual conference; to be more precise, before it actually began. Three prominent members were standing outside the conference hall and talking till one of them suggested they should go in as the conference was about to start. Another one, saying that he was the main speaker that night, hurried towards the door, the other two following him. The speaker unobstructedly passed through the door while our other two friends were stopped so that their names could be checked against the list of the participants. As it happened neither of them was on the list. One was so busy with his current work that he had forgotten to register. The other just thought that no advanced registration would be necessary. As a result, our friends were not allowed in and had to leave deeply disappointed and upset.

Let us now look closer at this episode and try to understand what actually happened there from the "threefold" point of view.

A conference like this one is primarily a spiritual event, therefore the right to participate in it should be considered on a spiritual basis only and on the principle of individual freedom. It means that everyone should be able to participate if only his participation is not, in the opinion of the organizers, spiritually harmful to the individual himself or to anybody else. Apart from this very specific situation, for which organizers bear full spiritual responsibility, there should be, as a matter of principle, no restrictions for anyone to take part in a spiritual event.

But an anthroposophical conference is not a spiritual event only. It also comprises an economic element, i.e. a financial means to enable it to take place. As we know, the main principle of this element is co-operation. It means that would-be participants should co-operate in their financial arrangements to bring the conference about. Obviously, financial means of individuals are different; hence their contributions might be different. But under no circumstances should the size of a financial contribution place any restriction on the participation in a spiritual event, especially after it has already materialized in a physical form.

A conference also comprises the third, legal element, but not so much in a form of legislation, but as organizational arrangement. The main principle here is equality. The arrangements based on this principle should be such as to enable every person to participate fully, and on an equal basis with others, in a spiritual event. Advanced knowledge of the number of the participants could be very important for organizers for the provision of adequate facilities for every participant. So the admission of a new participant should be considered, in this respect, along these lines. Any restriction here should be imposed only if an unplanned participation proves to be disadvantageous to other participants, and not because it does not tally with the bureaucratic zeal of the organizers.

So when a person's name is on the list of the conference participants it means that in his or her case all three elements have been considered and worked out. When a person appears at the doors of the conference whose name is not on the list it means that his or her participation should be considered now on the basis of the three principles. Firstly, a spiritual aspect. If someone is turned down on these grounds it should be made absolutely clear to the person in question. Secondly, an organizational aspect. The person should be admitted provided it is to no-one's disadvantage and the person himself is prepared to accept possible inconveniences resulting from his unexpected participation. Thirdly, a financial aspect: and here a new participant should be invited to make a contribution towards the cost of the conference or of some other future event.

That is how, in my opinion, our two unfortunate friends should have been treated at the conference. But nothing of the sort took place except what belonged to an old and habitual way of thinking and acting. It is not that the right procedure was not there – there was no right consciousness. I am sure that the issue of the threefold social order and new consciousness was referred to more than once at the conference. But it was not recognized at its very doorstep in the most mundane and concrete situation. This for me symbolizes the general situation in our movement. Despite many years of what some people call "working with Anthroposophy," despite current interest in the threefold ideas and attempts to implement them, their very essence has not yet penetrated the

consciousness of our members. Is then what we are trying to build on old consciousness viable, and will it endure?

What I say here is not meant as a criticism at all. Hardly any of us, anyway, whether he places himself within or outside the anthroposophical movement, is in a position to utter a self-righteous criticism. What we all need, and I hope want, is understanding. If one finds an old consciousness in the old world-order one is not surprised at all. But if one does not find new consciousness in a movement like ours, with its direct link to the spiritual world, one is bound to ask why. Here again I do not ask this question in respect of some individuals or others. In the context of my presentation I am trying to examine something not intrinsically , individual, but rather more objective and concerning us all, more or less; in other words, something related to our collective, rather than individual, karma.

This brings me to the main stream in our movement, the Anthroposophical Society. Through one drop of this stream – a tiny event in the life of the Society – I shall try and find an answer, a partial answer of course, to the above question of consciousness. This time I myself was involved in the event, but only marginally and indirectly, and at its initial stage. My own concern here is limited to one particular phenomenon which became evident to me through this event. But first I shall give you some background details.□

When John Gordon and I decided to start publication of the "Forum for the Anthroposophical Community" we wanted to inform the entire community about our intention. The only way to do it was (and still is) through the News Sheet. So we sent our announcement□ to the editor with the request to insert it in the next issue. Some six weeks later, shortly before the News Sheet was due to appear, the editor suddenly informed us that there was no room for our announcement. We could not possibly accept this because we had sent our contribution well in advance, and it was the editor's task to provide space for people's contributions, especially for those which were first to arrive. Then the editor, much to our astonishment, started questioning the aims and motives behind our initiative. These, being clear from our announcement, were not, in our opinion, relevant to the question of publication. But the editor went further, commenting on the content of the announcement and raising the question of altering the wording, thus altering the meaning of what we wanted to say and do.

We had never asked the editor for her opinion on our initiative but would have welcomed it exactly in the same way as an opinion of any other member of the community. We would have been only too happy to publish in the Forum people's reservations about it or an outright negative opinion – that is our routine task as editors. But the editor of the News Sheet turned her routine task into what I regard as a spiritual imposition, dictate and ultimatum. We could not accept it, and she refused to publish our announcement.

To take you just a little bit further, John wrote to the Council requesting, among other things, that they instruct the editor to include our announcement in the next issue of the News Sheet. The Council found our initiative useful and agreed that our intention should be made known to the membership. But they refused to overrule the editor's decision because they trusted her and had every confidence in her work. In the end they came up with a "Solomon's" decision: to print our announcement separately and send it to the members with the next mail, together with the News Sheet but independently of it.

Now the Council's decision apart, let us look a little bit closer at the thinking behind their endorsement of the editor's decision. Here again, as in our previous examples, we have something which is absolutely right and at the same time absolutely wrong. Of course it is right to trust people and to have confidence in their work. In fact mutual trust and confidence is the only basis on which a true co-operation and working together is possible. But when we talk about our trust in other people we should be very specific about what we mean by trust and what particular area of people's activity we have in mind.

When the Council appoint an editor to publish the News Sheet, it is not only they and the editor, but the entire membership, who should be clear about what the functions of the News Sheet and its editor are. One would see the functions of such a publication as those of a periodical "notice board" for members to inform each other of what is happening within the Society. If that is the case then one believes that the Council will entrust

someone with the task of an editor in whom they have confidence in two areas of editorial functions – organizational and financial. These are basically as follows: the News Sheet should appear regularly; contributions should be published on time and without misleading errors and misprints; the funds should be used with discretion; the equipment should be looked after, and so on.

But the Council have in fact entrusted the editor of the News Sheet with something else, which belongs not to the economic or organizational but to the spiritual sphere. And this, in my opinion, is absolutely wrong. We have to look deeper into the nature of this trust and into its consequences to realize the seriousness of its spiritual implications.

In effect the editor has been granted the spiritual power to decide, and the executive power to implement, her decisions, for and on behalf of 2500 members, what each of them is allowed to say to and hear from one another. In her own words, it is she who determines "the amount people are prepared to read" and who does "feel responsible for the content," i.e. for what people say to each other via the News Sheet. This responsibility is exercised, to take our case as an example,<sup>\*</sup> in the following way: "If I get a notice which raises so many doubts in my mind as yours does I think I would be failing in my job if I did not point them out." Pointing out is the first step. If no notice of it is taken then there follows a ban.

Just think, dear friends, who could it be who feels responsible for other people's thoughts and impulses and who considers it as his job to point out to others his doubts about them? A headmistress? A Grand Inquisitor? But we are not in a school with its headmistress and pupils. Nor are we in the Middle Ages with their Grand Inquisitor and heretics. And we are not in a modern newspaper with its editor checking his staff's articles for their possible legal or moral liability. We live in the 20th century and try to express freely our spiritual impulses within a spiritual community and the society which was envisaged by its founder as a centre of new consciousness. But within this centre we have now what is nothing other than an old form of spiritual censorship.

Now can you, by any stretch of imagination, see Rudolf Steiner appointing somebody whose job and responsibility it would be to point out to others his doubts as to their spiritual impulses and on the basis of these doubts ban those impulses from being publicly shared with others? Can you imagine Rudolf Steiner himself doing this job? But today, nearly sixty years after the foundation of the Society, the Council of the AS in GB appoint a person who takes upon herself this function with the Council expressing their "trust and confidence."

What are of particular significance here are the relations, at several levels, between the editor and the membership over whom she has this extraordinary power. She has been appointed, and not elected by members, quite a few of whom, I am sure, do not even know who is doing this job and most of whom know nothing about the above aspect of this job carried out on their behalf. What is more, as we have seen from the whole episode, in this extraordinary aspect of her power the editor, in actual fact, is accountable to no-one.

Here we come to something very important. It would be absolutely preposterous to suggest that the editor of the News Sheet is just this type of person who is a glutton for power and seeks control over people and their activities. Of course there are tendencies in some to assert themselves through whatever power their position in life gives them. But I am sure the editor is guilty of it no more than any of us. Without knowing her personally I am absolutely convinced that she is an honest and sincere person and a good and dedicated anthroposophist. She undoubtedly believes that what she does is right and does not see it in terms of power, control and censorship, and most certainly does not pursue through it her own ends. She herself has no personal usage or advantage of her position and of the work she does, only headaches I believe.

Having said this I do not mean to say that *nobody else* uses the editor's position and tries to pursue through her work his own ends. There is *someone* indeed who wants to have control over what people think, say, hear and ultimately do. And this someone does not miss any opportunity to use any situation, person or organization to put people under

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<sup>\*</sup> As we found out later, our case was far from being an exception.

his control and exercise his power over them. We know who this someone is and have to recognize that at least in one sphere of its life the AS in GB has Mr. A. as its chairman.

If it only had been one! I am sure I have not been alone in experiencing how difficult it is to say and do things within our community, how some impulses have been stifled and others distorted or ignored, how some noisy and bustling activities with very little spiritual content have been promoted, how successful diversions from the spirit have been, how misunderstanding and separation has prevailed in people's relations. We cannot always see Ahriman behind these happenings because it is easier to recognize the results of his work than the work itself.

There are three signs by which we can recognize the actual working of this being. Firstly, he never acts directly, openly and honestly, but always in a false, hidden or obscure manner. There are always lies, half truths, cunning or hypocrisy involved in the deeds sponsored by this being. Secondly, there is always a confusion, misunderstanding or other factors which prevent people from seeing, knowing and understanding what is going on. Lack of information, ignorance, apathy, diversion, substitution of one issue for another, injection of personal elements into the issues in question, are but a few weapons from his arsenal. Finally, if you do see and understand what is going on and find it wrong, just try to do something about it. You will immediately find yourselves up against a brick wall. There will be all sorts of obstacles, in addition to those mentioned above, procedural difficulties, time factor, importance of other issues, various external and internal pressures, etc., etc., with the result that you will have to give up in the end. Because you will realize that *there is nothing whatsoever you can do about it*. And it will be absolutely true. And it will be another sign of Ahriman working behind the situation and of another triumph for him.

The picture I have been painting for you might seem gloomy and hopeless. Gloomy it is, hopeless it is not. What I have been saying here is not something abstract and theoretical, but is a result of life experience. Obviously I cannot declare my own experience as being universal and objective; and my spiritual perceptions are just personal intuitions and not spiritual facts. But I have no other means for comprehending the world except through my personal experience and by using my thinking.

Having experienced the agony of impasses and traps set up by the Adversary in many life situations I have also experienced the confidence of a possibility to overcome them. It is the latter, not the former, that is my main message. And the possibility lies within ourselves. As the first step to realize it we have to gain a real comprehension of what is happening in the world today.

I have tried to show that comprehension void of spiritual reality renders people blind and perplexed; that a general spiritual picture void of its concrete physical counterparts renders people vague and aloof; that a selective or partial view void of the ability to form a comprehensive picture of reality with its relevant details, their places and relations, renders people unable to distinguish between right and wrong. But it is through Anthroposophy that we can achieve a spiritually based, concrete and comprehensive understanding of the world.

Not through just reading, memorizing or quoting the works of Rudolf Steiner. Nor through "applying" Anthroposophy, because Anthroposophy is a living being, and if one "applies" her, one kills her. It is through Anthroposophy living in our thinking that we can achieve an understanding of the world events which would correspond to spiritual and physical reality.

One's relation with Anthroposophy, as a part of one's inner spiritual life, is an individual matter and of nobody's concern. But the results of one's inner life which one brings into the world in the form of an understanding of it become a matter of concern for others too. For a right understanding helps others and the world in its development, while a wrong understanding hampers and destroys.

Hence you have every right to scrutinize my presentation and question it as to its real value. If I myself were asked whether what I have presented is a result of an anthroposophical understanding, I would give two answers to this. One is very simple – I

do not know. The other is more complicated: what is true in my presentation I believe to have come through Anthroposophy, what is wrong came through some other source, perhaps through Mr. A. himself.

This brings me to the first reason why I have decided to share with you my thoughts. Though inwardly I experience them as truth I have no means of getting that direct and objective confirmation which casts away any doubt. Rather than from the source of all things, my confirmation has to come from this world, from other people. I think we, ordinary human beings, need each other and each other's experiences, reflections and judgements, for arriving at a fuller and objective picture.

This leads me to my second reason. It is not only that by sharing our thoughts with each other we are widening and deepening our individual understanding. I think it is not enough today that there exist in the world individual understandings only. The world needs its understanding to be shared by groups of people, it needs communities of understanding and awareness, living and working out of shared understanding and awareness. Then such communities will become healing centres from which a healing power will radiate out into the world.

That is what I wanted to share with you, and I hope you are more clear now about my original intentions. As I said at the beginning I do not expect any immediate reaction from you. But if you ever decide to respond to my presentation I hope you will be as specific and frank as I tried to be, and would not be hampered by considerations of politeness, friendliness, and such-like. We are involved in something much more serious than just exchange of niceties, we are after an understanding of reality as it is. If I see that my understanding is wrong and did not help you to see things better or differently, did not stimulate your thinking or help you in some other way, then I shall try and rethink the whole thing anew.

On my part, if you ever decide to share with me your thoughts, I can promise you exactly the kind of response I expect from you. It does not matter what phenomenon or event you decide to comprehend. It could be your personal relations with somebody, or something you have read, or a topical international event. What matters is that you should really try to penetrate it with your thinking rather than scratch it with your emotions or polish it with generalities. It does not have to be me or other people present here with whom you might decide to share your understanding. The important thing is that people should start this process of *concrete* understanding of *concrete* events around them and of sharing their understanding with each other.

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I would like to end up with a personal note if I may. The day I finished these writings I had one of those moments of doubt which are familiar to people who try to do things on their own initiative. I doubted my own intentions, my ability to speak on the issues in question and most of all the need for what I was bringing out. I had tried before to share some of my thoughts with fellow anthroposophists, and the response had never been very encouraging. When there is no need – for whatever reason – for what one has to say it is a clear indication that one should shut up. This is what I did every time I received such a message till later I felt impelled to speak up again.

But this time when I experienced familiar mixed feelings of doubt and determination to carry my effort through I received an unexpected and reassuring encouragement. It came from a person who was much more knowledgeable and wiser than I am, but who, on one occasion, had similar aspirations and even felt himself to be not quite up to the task. That very day I happened to read Dr. König's lectures *The Destiny and the History of the Jewish People*. Explaining to his listeners why he, "by no means an historian or an expert on the Jewish people," tried to speak on this subject, he used the following words which serve here as the best conclusion to my paper:

"I consider it, dear friends, as one of our most important tasks – as pupils of Rudolf Steiner and spiritual science – to try and understand the phenomena of our time. To try to interpret happenings which otherwise would remain mere events. But in trying to understand them, something takes place which does not remain within the heads of those who try to bring about some understanding. Something which does not remain in the books or articles which are written – or in the heads of those who listen to and read such books or articles. A process of transformation is brought about which in our life-time is perhaps hardly to be observed. But a process which might have fundamental repercussions – in so far as the destiny of the event can be changed by learning to understand its real (that means its spiritual) value. I say this not with particular regard to the subject which we are trying to follow up. I say it as a general task: as far as I can understand, a fundamental task. Because it is on us to change the trend of our time. And as we are almost unable to change it outwardly, we owe the debt to Rudolf Steiner to attempt and to change it inwardly."

## NOTES

### 1

At the time that I am talking about, the thinking process in the country had just began, at least for my generation. Before that the country had been for many years in a state of a mental and spiritual paralysis. Recovery from this state primarily means to recover or to obtain the ability to think, that is to think independently. Those few who ventured this activity inevitably became dissidents, with the outward results quite well known now to the people in the West. The inward results of their activities are much less known. These, as far as thinking of the future of Russia and its people is concerned, are also not very encouraging. On the one hand, people come with various blue prints and projects which at best are results of wishful thinking. On the other, people come to the conclusion that Russia cannot be helped at all towards its better future, that the country is doomed and that even the Russian people as we used to know it does not exist anymore – it has turned into an impersonal mass called "population." This view, as well as any of the above projects, could be fully justified on the premises of their protagonists, who clearly lack a spiritual picture of the situation.

As a result it is not only these few who fail to produce anything positive and viable; it also means facilitation and propagation of the existing system and the situation. Because whenever somebody raises his voice against it he might be immediately retorted to by being asked what he himself could suggest to change it. And as no clear-cut answer can be given the inference is that things should rather remain as they are. This is a trap for anyone in an unsatisfactory and complicated situation set up by those in whose interest it is that the situation should remain as it is.

I first experienced it in Russia in my contacts with clever but cynical people who learnt to live within the Soviet system and even use it to their own advantage quite successfully. Of course, they used to say, they'd love things to be changed, but since that was not possible ("neither you, nor I, nor anybody else knows how to do it") it was only prudent to adjust oneself to the system and to use it. I have encountered such an attitude in this country too, but I have learnt my lesson since. Whenever people tell me that they can clearly see that a particular situation is wrong and they are all for a change but that it is hardly possible, since nobody knows how to do it, I immediately respond with the question, which is both a test of their sincerity and a starting point for a real change: Do you *really* want a change in the situation? Because if you do but cannot immediately come with a definite solution, an honest and earnest search for it is already the beginning of the transformation of what is wrong and bad into right and good.

In my presentation I did not speak about the peace movement or CND as such. Unlike Bukovsky I would not call the people taking part in them "useful idiots" if only because of the sincerity and good intent on the part of many of them. However, these qualities are necessary but not sufficient in our time. I tried to show it in the example of Dr. Humphrey. If he and others do not gain a true understanding of the problem they are dealing with they will pave the road to hell with their good intentions.

A true understanding is gained not only by penetrating with thought into the depth of the problem but also by grasping it in its entirety. Otherwise we can have at best a partial truth or understanding only. I am afraid this is the case with the above campaign: it is based on a limited picture of the problem and consequently offers a limited solution only, which in effect is no solution at all. My reservations about the campaign I perhaps can best express by a number of questions addressed to the campaigners.

Do they remember how and why the Bomb was created? Do they remember that at that time the whole civilized world was fighting the most diabolic force in human history, and it was to save the world from this force that the Bomb was created? Do they think that today this or such a force does not exist any more? Or do they believe that it exists in those countries only where they are allowed to campaign against it freely and openly and that they fight it in its very den? Or if this force is operational in other countries too where they (or anybody else for that matter) have no influence or control over it, do they think that in these countries it does not or will not have the Bomb or will never use it? And if it is likely to use the Bomb to achieve its diabolic objectives, do they believe that the only way to stop it is to grant it exclusive rights to have and use the Bomb? Or perhaps they have other than nuclear and military means to prevent it from using the Bomb? Or would they suggest that if the worst comes to the worst we should be prepared to surrender to this force and live under its rule, Le. with concentration camps and tortures, with gas chambers and psychiatric asylums for healthy people, with elimination of whole peoples and of any trace of any form of freedom whatever?

There would be some, I am sure, who would answer all this by simply saying that whatever the course of world events they themselves refuse to use force against anybody and be a part of anything connected with force, hatred and evil. I respect this stand, and in regard to some people cannot even see how they could be anything but what we call pacifists and conscientious objectors. I only want to say this. We all live in a world pervaded with force, hatred and evil, and we all are related to and responsible for them. If some of us choose spiritual means to withstand them still we should not forget that at least in some cases forcible resistance is only possible, and somebody has to do it for all of us. Perhaps even that I can write and you can read about these things is due to the fact that at this very time somebody is doing something less spiritual – toiling, suffering, starving, fighting and even killing.

It is not to say that nuclear weapons should become an acceptable element of our life. It would be abnormal if people did not strive to put an end to this evil and destructive force. I only do not see how it can be done at present, either by the means employed by CND or even by some magic, if that were the case. I think we, as mankind, have gone too far in our downfall to do anything, or even for someone to say "abracadabra," for nuclear weapons to disappear and for us to live happily ever after. If we were to wake up one morning in a nuclear-free or still better, weapon-free world one does not have to be a prophet to predict what would happen next in this world of ours: by lunch-time everyone would be armed to the teeth with conventional weapons and by dinner-time nuclear weapons would be back in their positions.

What is more, if it is only states that possess nuclear weapons today, tomorrow it will be organizations, and the day after tomorrow individuals. No protests or unilateral measures will stop this process, still less likely are they to stop maniacs. These people are unheeding to anything and unaccountable to anyone except that Force which guides and inspires them. This is the very Force which blinds Dr. Humphrey and his friends, which

prevents people from thinking and which is at the centre of many a problem and trouble in the world. It is at this centre that we should recognize, face and tackle this Force.

Nuclear weapons, whatever their nature and character, are but only means in what has become the most common and universal phenomenon of our time – a conflict between people. If we can understand and resolve this phenomenon perhaps the threat of nuclear weapons would not be that daunting.

Basically there is nothing wrong in human conflicts if they do not go beyond mere disagreements, differences of opinions, misunderstandings, and such-like. In many cases such conflicts are inevitable and even necessary. And it was the ancients who had a saying that truth is born out of debate. The problem arises when a conflict turns into a *confrontation*. This is the real nature of a typical modern conflict, whether between the East and the West, or in the Middle East, or in Poland, or industrial and social unrests in this country, or many others. At the centre of each of these different conflicts lie three common elements which manifest themselves in the three spheres of human activity – in thinking, feeling and willing.

On the thinking level the parties to a conflict believe themselves to be opposite forces facing each other in confrontation and striving each to get the upper hand over the other. On the feeling level they confront each other with antipathy, animosity and even hatred. As to the means to achieve their objectives: the parties usually have recourse to force either as a threat or as a direct action. It is this force which often "resolves" conflicts. But even when they are resolved by what we call "compromise" it does not resolve the main elements of conflicts, and does not remove them from people's consciousness, from their activity and from the evolutionary process. It only drives deeper under the surface the three forces on which the Adversary bases his power – wrong thinking, wrong feeling and wrong willing. But not for long. They will appear again, perhaps in different circumstances and in a different form, but always stronger than before.

It is clear from this that we cannot eliminate the evil by trying to stop one or another of its manifestations. In fact we cannot eliminate it at all, because it lives in intrinsic human activities of thinking, feeling and willing. The only thing we can do is to change, to transform it, by transforming these activities: wrong thinking into right thinking, wrong feeling into right feeling and wrong willing into right willing.

Hence a real solution of a conflict situation can only be based on this transformation when

- people's notion of it as a confrontation is transformed into their realization that they belong together in every human situation, that they depend on each other and sustain one another, that their unity in a broader sense is their guarantee for survival;
- people's feelings of hostility are transformed into those of cooperation and brotherhood;
- people's aggressive intentions and destructive actions are transformed into conciliatory impulses and benevolent deeds.

At times I have a strong feeling that somebody is trying very hard to lure us from real solutions into the traps of partial and temporary ones, and to divert us from real issues of our time into their forceful and formidable manifestations.

### 3

Two things I would like to say in connection with my reference to this particular event.

As it concerns the life of the AS in GB I feel I must make my relations to the Society clear to the readers by saying that I am not a member of this Society. This fact might cast doubts in some people's minds about my right and credibility to speak about something of which I am not a part and do not have an intimate knowledge. To this I can say the following.

Firstly, an organization which purports to be not a closed sect but a servant to the whole of mankind cannot and should not expect this service to be accepted

unquestionably. Secondly, I am not going to talk about the inner life of the Society or of such aspects of it, or in such a way, as could be talked about only from inside. Thirdly, the episode I am referring to is "self-contained" in the sense that no further references are needed for seeing clearly the phenomenon in question. What is more, my position as a non-member allows me to limit myself to this episode only without going further into the life of the Society or into taking some other actions re the episode which otherwise my responsibility as a member might have imposed on me.

The other thing is that the issue I am going to discuss is connected this time with a particular person. Though again I am discussing the issue, not the person, a personal reference is unavoidable here. Personal participation and responsibility is implicit in human deeds. If such deeds are private and confined to the precincts of one's home they are of nobody's concern. But as soon as one steps outside one's privacy to bring one's deeds to others the situation changes completely. No artist exhibiting his work, or a teacher, or a bus driver, or a civil servant, or a public work volunteer, etc. can have a complete freedom of action and be exempted from public scrutiny and criticism. Such a person should not only be ready to accept them as part of his social involvement with other people, but be also prepared to explain, and if need be to defend, his actions. I for one am exactly in this position as an editor of the "Forum for the Anthroposophical Community," or as an author of these lines.

But I would like to take my personal responsibility further than that. Apart from being responsible to the spiritual world for what comes from me as the truth or its distortion, and apart from my general responsibility to other people for what I bring to life in society, I feel particularly responsible to a person I happen to disagree with publicly. It is difficult to define the exact terms of this responsibility and its concrete forms of expression. But my feeling is that there is a connection between the consequences of what such a person does and of what I say about it. And probably, as a minimum, I should be prepared, even having no doubts about being in the right, to partake in resolving these consequences in regard to the person and his deeds.

4

## FORUM for the Anthroposophical Community

No true community can exist if its members are lacking in genuine interest in each other. But such interest can only develop if it is the interest in *the spirit* of one's fellow human being which finds its expression in thoughts. A common thought life should lie at the basis of a true spiritual community. That is what we need for our anthroposophical movement and it can be created only on the basis of an ongoing sharing of thoughts, an ongoing conversation with each other wherein everyone has an opportunity to express himself, to listen to others, to contemplate the thoughts of others and to respond to them.

For this to come about we need an open forum in the form of a periodical in whose pages such a conversation can take place for all those concerned for Anthroposophy and the Anthroposophical Movement. The realisation of this need has prompted us to take it upon ourselves to provide such a forum for the expression of this concern. Outlined below are our intentions in connection with this task:

1. We do not regard the Forum as *our* venture in that we see it as belonging solely to the Community. We do not see our role as that of editors in a conventional sense of the word. We are rather intermediaries – between people and the Forum – whose function it is to provide means for the aforementioned conversation to take place.

2. Therefore we are not going to determine the content of the conversation (i.e. of the Forum) beyond its general theme. Nor are we going to define the nature of an individual contribution – which is the sole responsibility of the contributor. In our opinion the content can

be anything – a thought or idea, an opinion or question, a proposal or problem, an event or observation – if, In the opinion of the contributor, it is relevant to the conversation.

3. If – for whatever reason – we feel that we cannot publish fully or at all a particular contribution, we would nevertheless always inform the readers about it, give our reasons for not publishing or for shortening it and would also give the address of the contributor so that whoever wanted to acquaint himself with the original can always do so. However we do hope that such occasions would not happen very often.

4. The Forum belongs to the Community not only in a spiritual but also in a financial sense, that is, the Community has to pay for it if it needs it and wants it. We do our work for free, but all other expenses would be reflected in the price of each issue.

5. We will pay for the first issue ourselves. If people's response, both spiritual and financial, shows that they need and want the Forum we will be happy to continue publishing it on this basis as long as the need and want and our ability to satisfy them are there. However, if people's response shows that there is no need and want for the Forum we would discontinue publication. We feel that any financial loss we might incur in this eventuality would be the least price one should be prepared to pay for such an endeavour.

6. If you yourself feel the need for such an initiative as the one just outlined, we invite you to contribute to the first issue if there is any matter which you feel you would like to see appear in such a publication as the one that is the aim of our initiative. If you wish your contribution to appear in the first issue it should reach us not later than September 1st 1981.

John Gordon                      Ilya Zilberberg

*(All in all, in the course of two years there were seven issues of the Forum. After the third issue John Gordon, due some changes in his life, could not continue with the editorship, and I became the sole editor of the Forum. The periodical ceased to exist not due to the lack of readership or financial resources, but because there were insufficient contributions to fill its pages.)*

#### About the Author

(as printed at the back cover of the leaflet)

Born in Russia, Ilya Zilberberg lived, before his emigration from the Soviet Union, in Moscow where he studied and worked for twelve years as an industrial designer and administrator. He met anthroposophy in Russia through a 'chance' meeting with a person for whom anthroposophy was a living reality. Together, in the subsequent ten years, they shared the few books by Rudolf Steiner which survived from pre-revolutionary times, a true friendship and the urgent need to understand contemporary life through anthroposophy. Since 1971 Ilya Zilberberg has been living in England, where he works as a senior lecturer in Russian and Soviet Studies at Portsmouth Polytechnic. In 1974 he moved to Forest Row to send his two children to Michael Hall (Rudolf Steiner) School; thenceforth he became particularly concerned with Waldorf Education.