

CONFORMIST, DISSIDENT, TERRORIST – THE INDIVIDUAL IN MODERN SOCIETY

This article was originally an oral presentation without any notes, apart from quotations. Later, at the friends' request, I wrote it down and extended. The original presentation came about in the following way.

In the Anthroposophical Centre in London, Rudolf Steiner House, they used to have an annual cycle of lectures on some topical but wide enough theme. Each lecture was an independent presentation by a guest speaker the subject being suggested to him. In 1986 when I was invited as one of the speakers the theme of the cycle was "Moral Issues in an Age of Permissiveness". In the programme it was elaborated in the following way: "The traditional mores of religion and of society have largely disappeared today. We now feel free. But do our actions always lead to the peace and joy we desire? Rudolf Steiner foresaw this time of moral autonomy, and therefore refrained from preaching. Instead he allows us to share his vision of man as a being of body, soul and spirit. Dormant faculties can be kindled which enable each one of us to approach his or her unique problems consciously."

The subjects of the lectures were as follows: "This Age of Uncertainty", "Who is to Engineer the Entry into Life?", "Death, Prolonging of Life, Euthanasia", "The Problem of Suicide", "Is the Family still Relevant?", "What is Truth?", "Partnership, Marriage, Separation", "Conception, Contraception, Abortion", "Unresolved Issues". I could change not only the title of the suggested theme but the theme itself. But I declined to do this. I accepted the title and whatever theme it denoted as a challenge and made it more specific by adding to the title the second part.

The present piece contains some terms and notions which I would not have used had my original audience not been anthroposophical. It might create some problems for an uninitiated reader. But I decided against changing the article or overloading it with explanations and comments. I am sure the reader would be able to sort out what is acceptable or unacceptable for him in it.

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When one speaks, or writes, publicly there could be two reasons for this. Either one is in possession of a special knowledge or expertise on a particular subject, and by sharing it with others one increases their knowledge of it. Or one is not in possession of any special knowledge on a particular subject as compared with other people, but by sharing with them his insight, his perception, his own comprehension of the subject he contributes to a better general understanding of it. My present contribution, by its very nature, definitely belongs to the latter category.

For me these three phenomena – Conformist, Dissident, and Terrorist – are real issues of modern life. They are not just some abstract notions or popular political terms denoting something that happens elsewhere, in particular circumstances and to particular people. They relate to and concern every human being who lives today and are the result of his encounter with his surroundings, his environment and society at large.

Either one accepts whatever comes one's way, taking it for granted and without questioning, and we call such a person a conformist. Or one questions and challenges popular views, expressing one's own views and opinions which do not coincide with those prevailing in one's environment or society and often contradicts them. Such a person would be called a dissident. Or a person might decide to go further than just expressing his views; he might decide to see them implemented, to act on them. And if he encounters any resistance and decides to overcome it by any means available including violence then he becomes a terrorist. Killing somebody is only an extreme form of terrorism which in its very essence is nothing other than the imposi-

tion on others – even by sacrificing their interests, well-being and lives – of one's own views and actions.

In our modern complicated life every individual acts, depending on the circumstances, at least in one of these capacities, and very often in all three. He might be one thing in his own family, something different with his friends, in his social and public life, and again something else at his place of work, with his colleagues. The variety of situations, circumstances and conditions of life together with the variety of human characters and their complexity produce such a multitude of manifestations of these phenomena that it is often very difficult to recognise them in every instance for what they are and especially to discern their common nature.

It is not these various manifestations that I will be dealing with here, though I would mention one or two of them. Rather I would like to go beyond them, beyond the appearance and try to penetrate into what works behind it – in human souls, in modern society, in our culture – as a common spiritual denominator for what finds its expression today as conformity, dissent, and terrorism. It is a vast task, which obviously goes beyond what one individual can do within a limited space and time. Nevertheless it is through limited individual endeavours, however inadequate, that a better awareness and understanding of what is happening in the world today can develop.

An individual has two tools, which can help him to understand a particular phenomenon. One is his life experiences and observations, which he accumulates throughout his life, and the other is his world-view, his understanding of the world, life and their evolution, which he acquires through his studies, and thinking. It is from these two perspectives that I would try to consider and understand the phenomena of conformity, dissent and terrorism.

My own life experience is derived from two societies in which I have happened to live; completely different, if not opposite in practically every aspect. One is the Soviet Union where I lived for the first thirty-five years of my life and the other is England where I have been living for the subsequent fifteen years. As any individual life experience, mine is intrinsically subjective. As for my world-view, being a student of anthroposophy I believe it to be of an objective character though again its particular interpretation and application coming as they do from an individual would be by necessity also subjective.

It is with this world-picture that I would like to begin my investigation. In order not to be completely lost in the multitude of all kinds of events taking place every moment of time in all corners of the world and in order to be able to cope with their mere presence in life, let alone understanding them, one should try, from time to time, to withdraw and distance oneself from them, to have a bird's eye view of them and ask oneself: What is *really* happening in the world? What are all these events about? In other words, what is the meaning and purpose of our evolution of which our time is a specific part and reflection?

As students of anthroposophy, by 'our evolution' we could mean its full scope from Saturn to Vulcan, or just the Earth evolution, or the Christian civilisation that started two thousand years ago with the Christ event, or the fifth Post-Atlantian epoch which began in the fifteenth century, or, most specifically, our time, the new Michaelic Age which is just over one hundred years old.

Whether we take one of these stages or all of them together we should ask ourselves: What is that central element that runs through the whole of human evolution and is of a particular importance for those who live in our time? Aphoristically the question could be answered thus: The object of our evolution is for man to come back to and unite, or re-unite, himself with the spiritual world. This overall task, which involves man as well as spiritual beings, comprises some very specific stages through which modern man has to pass in order to achieve the final objective.

In the first instance he should become aware of the existence of the spiritual world, of its presence and working in everything physical as well as in what does not have a physical manifestation. Then man has to go further and acquire knowledge of the spiritual world, which should be as concrete and precise as his knowledge of the physical reality. After that man has to enter the final stage of his reunion with the spiritual world, with gods when he becomes their conscious and able co-worker, co-creator and participator in their deeds here on earth, as well as in the realm of spirit.

These three stages of man's coming together with gods will not come to pass on their own, in a 'natural' way. Nor will they just be bestowed upon him as a gift or blessing. Man has to labour, to fight his way through them, step by step and through his own strenuous efforts. To be able to do this he has to develop within himself three distinct qualities corresponding to the three stages of his evolutionary task.

First he has to develop the feeling that there is something in the world higher than himself and than what meets his eye, that he is in the presence of a higher world-order, is a part of the great world-unity, and that he has trust in it and wants to live in loving harmony with it. And we can call this quality *true feeling*.

Then, in order to acquire knowledge of the spiritual world, to be able to cognize it, man has to develop within himself a special organ of cognition, a special quality. This quality is thinking, special thinking, which is free from ties and constraints of the physical reality and which finds itself in the spiritual world in its own element. This quality can be called *true thinking*.

And to become co-creator with gods man needs yet another quality. He should be able to transform his spiritual knowledge, his ideas into ideals, and these into will impulses, which he should ultimately realise into concrete deeds. And this ability, this quality can be called *true willing*.

So the development of these three qualities is the task of our evolution, specifically of its present stage. We can say that the impulses and forces underlying their development constitute spiritual laws currently at work in world evolution. The fulfilment of these laws is the task shared equally by man and by those spiritual beings who guide his evolution.

But these are not the only beings, impulses and forces that are working in our evolution. There are others as well working in the opposite direction and trying to block man's evolution and prevent his re-union with the spiritual world. It is as important for man to understand the nature and working of these adverse, Ahrimanic forces as it is to know the spiritual laws and beings that govern his evolution.

So how does Ahriman work? How can he achieve his aim and sabotage the working of the spiritual laws? He cannot just withdraw them from world evolution – it is beyond his power. Nor can he block them and make them inoperative – they are here to stay and to take their course. But he can do something else the adverse effect of which is not less severe and damaging. He can *distort* the working of these laws, and it is exactly what he is doing today making *distortion* one of his main weapons and methods of work.

To discern and understand Ahrimanic distortions we could be helped by the close examination of some events and phenomena of life, which we deem wrong. If our perception is accurate and penetrating enough we can discover that behind what is wrong or false there often lies something which is basically right and true but which has been distorted by being done in a wrong way, or at a wrong place or time, or for a wrong reason, or was affected by some other wrong factors.

These distortions can be observed in nature and man, in organic as well in spiritual phenomena. To give a couple of well-known examples, if the substances and forces pertaining to the growth of the plant are transferred from the sphere where they belong to another sphere, then poison develops in the plant (belladonna). Or if some processes and substances, which are organic in one system of the hu-

man organism, penetrate into another illness occurs. The same happens in the cultural realm, in the sphere of human activity where man-made distortions also can be discovered and followed to their primal source.

An example of one such distortion and its discovery can be found in the works of the great Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyev. He worked in and was concerned with a very important sphere of human activity – thinking. In this sphere he encountered numerous misconceptions and delusions, and his insight into their nature can serve both as a brilliant illustration of the working of a true human spirit and as an effective methodological tool applicable to any sphere of man's activity:

*Any delusion contains within itself an undoubted truth of which it is merely a distortion to a greater or lesser extent. The delusion survives, attracts and is dangerous by virtue of this truth and only via this truth can it be properly exposed and confuted. Therefore the first task of enlightened criticism when faced with some such delusion is to discover that truth by virtue of which it survives and which it distorts.**

What Vladimir Solovyev has discovered in the field of philosophy is also at work in other fields of human life and culture – scientific, economic, social, artistic, religious. The fact that distortions take place, and the manner in which they come about, can also be attributed to a spiritual law, 'the law of distortion'. It is this law that Ahri-man is using to sabotage the three spiritual impulses for developing true feeling, true thinking, and true willing. It is only by discovering, very specifically, these workings of Ahriman that they can be exposed, refuted, combated and rectified.

Now if we were to sum up, very succinctly, the world events of our time, we can say that, in a certain sense, they epitomise and reflect man's arduous returning to the spiritual world. In fact this coming back is a battle, and in as much as it is a battle of man and by man, it is also a battle for man between Christian and Ahrimanic forces. It is in the context of this battle that I shall consider the phenomena of conformist, dissident, and terrorist beginning with the one, which happened to have a special significance in my life – with the 'dissident'.

I heard the word 'dissident' for the first time fifteen years ago when I arrived in England. On my arrival I met many people who were involved in Soviet affairs, either as specialists (so-called Sovietologists), or because of their concern with human rights, Soviet Jewry and other issues of Soviet life. These people referred to those in the Soviet Union concerned with the same issues among whom I had many friends, as dissidents. Me too they called a dissident.

Unlike now, fifteen years ago this word was not contained in the Russian political parlance, and I did not know its meaning. So I looked it up in the dictionary and read its definition. The word was new to me, but not the phenomenon it described. The phenomenon was part of the Soviet life, in fact has been part of Russian life for many years, and obviously there is a word to denote it – a Russian word.

As this Russian word is of a particular importance for understanding the nature of the phenomenon it defines I am going to introduce and explain it. It is a longish and complex word – 'inakomyslyashchii', and translated literally it means, 'the one who thinks differently'. In the Soviet reality where 'different' is synonymous both with 'wrong' and 'anti' it is not a neutral descriptive word, and when used by authorities it sounds ominous. In fact it can be used by them as the first warning, threat and accu-

* Cf. "Scientific theories are never without some foundation. What is remarkable about them is that they do always contain say, a quarter, or an eighth, or a sixteenth, or a hundredth part of the truth; and it is this fraction of the truth, put forward as it is in a very clever and suggestive manner which deceives people", Rudolf Steiner, "A lecture on Eurythmy", Penmaenmawr, 26 August 1923.

sation against those stepping out of line: "You are inakomyslyashchii, you are the one who thinks differently!"

What I found remarkable when I was still in the Soviet Union was the way some of my friends reacted to this accusation. They responded not so much to the current political connotation of the word implicit in the authorities' threat but to its true original meaning, and retorted, in essence, as follows: "What do you mean, we think differently? Differently from what? We definitely think differently from you, but then you don't think at all. Or perhaps it is you who think differently? Anyway what is that objective and true thinking which can serve as a criterion against which all other modes of thinking are 'different' and wrong?"

This is how some people challenged the authorities. I found this challenge remarkable not only for its courage but especially for its spiritual truthfulness. By penetrating into the genius of the language and following, instinctively, the spirit of the times these people managed to come to man's crucial question: Is there such a thing as objective and right thinking, and if there is, what is it?

Thus the genius of the language and the spirit of the times if discovered and followed truthfully can bring one face to face with the central issues and problems of the day. But they cannot solve them for him. Those people in Russia managed to liberate their thinking – but they did not manage to make it free. They liberated it from the shackles of the official ideology and started thinking for themselves. Having done so they leaped spiritually from the Dark Ages into the 20th century. In their consciousness they 'caught up' with the Western world. But like the rest of the world they have not solved, or have not even pondered over or brought to their full consciousness, the problem of true, objective thinking and of 'different' and wrong thinking.

Had they pursued the problem far enough they would have discovered that it can be solved and that Spiritual Science gives an answer to their question. It reveals that thinking which is in accord with the spiritual laws and order of the world is true and objective, and that the development of such thinking is one of man's main tasks today, while *different* thinking limited to and conditioned by the physical only is untrue and wrong. A rejection of the spirit-based thinking and adherence to the physically orientated thinking only is a deviation and *dissent* from the right course of evolution. The one who is pursuing such a dissent on a global scale and who is a leader and inspirer of many an individual deviation here on earth is Ahriman. It is he who really 'thinks differently' and who is a Supreme Dissident today. If we do not want to get under his spell and leadership we have to see, very specifically, how he brings about and accomplishes his dissent through our human deeds and affairs.

We know from our studies of the crucial importance, which our time has for the whole of human evolution. In fact it is a turning point when humanity has to decide on the course and direction of its further development. Over centuries preparations have been taking place both in the spiritual world and here on earth for what has to come to pass in our decisive time. As a vital part of these preparations and help to mankind the spiritual world was to send its messenger who would show the way and lead it towards its spiritual objective. Ahriman who is particularly active in such decisive times has also been anticipating the advent of the new age and has been making his own preparations. These can be discerned even in external historical events if examined closely, and here I would like to point to just one.

It is a document written in the late sixties of the last century by a young Russian who was one of the initiators of Russian political terrorism. In retrospect he can also be called one of the fathers of the modern political terrorism because as a social/spiritual phenomenon this type of terrorism originated in nineteenth century Russia. The man's name was Sergey Nechaev, and the activities of this man and his

group were depicted by Dostoevsky in his brilliant and prophetic novel *The Possessed*.

The document I am referring to was written and published, I believe, in the West, in Switzerland, and then found its way, together with the author, to Russia. It was called *The Catechism of the Revolutionary*, and among other things it also speaks of morality. In fact it gives a definition of morality, which goes as follows: "For the revolutionary everything that promotes the triumph of the revolution is moral, and everything that hampers it is immoral and criminal."

To understand its true meaning and significance we should see this document with its definition of morality in its proper historical/spiritual context. It appeared just on the eve of the new Michaelic Age, which has a special importance for human evolution. It is the Age of great changes and developments, which are to take place, primarily, in the inner being of man and then find their expression in his external life. No longer will he be guided by what comes from the outside as moral principles, conventions, traditions, etc. All this has to collapse and lose its value for man. His guidance has to come from within, from his enhanced consciousness and inner sense of morality. He has to become a morally conscious being which can be achieved only through the understanding of the true nature and meaning of morality.

Therefore at the very beginning of the New Age its herald addressed himself to this question. The affirmation of morality and moral laws as an objective reality and of their spiritual origin and connection with man's inner being and freedom was his first and major contribution towards man's evolutionary task. It is in the light of this that Nechaev's definition of morality should be examined and understood – for what it was trying to bring into the world and human evolution at its decisive time.

Nechaev defines morality in terms of some earthly man-made event (a revolution). By doing so he deprives morality of its spiritual foundation and withdraws it from the spiritual basis of human evolution, i.e. from evolution itself. This also deprives morality of its objective nature and makes it dependent on something circumstantial and transient.

The fact that the event whereby Nechaev defines morality is of a violent nature is immaterial here. It could have been something constructive and even lofty like, say, the building of a hospital for handicapped children. As a basis for the definition of morality it would have been equally wrong and bad – "Everything that promotes the building of a hospital for handicapped children is moral, and everything that hampers it is immoral and criminal."

As soon as morality is shifted into the sphere where not the spiritual/objective but the arbitrary/subjective rules, the declared moral principles are capable only of engendering harm and causing confusion and division among people. To begin with, Nechaev's morality opens doors for committing all sorts of actions in the name of the cause (revolutions, hospitals, etc.), which would be justified as being useful and moral. Then it divides people, regardless of their views, activities and occupation, into two categories, those who promote the cause and those who hamper it.

Nobody can escape its iron grip, even those who might have other ideas, impulses or interests in life than those concerned with revolutions or hospitals. Nechaev's successors in Soviet Russia made it abundantly clear: "Those who are not with us are against us."

But even those who are 'with us', who want to promote the cause and even accept Nechaev's morality can never agree among themselves on its interpretation and find themselves divided into belligerent camps. Some ardent supporters and promoters of the cause might be accused by others of hampering it and therefore being immoral. Such accusations might have very dire consequences, and here we come to another very important aspect of Nechaev's morality.

At the time when individual inner freedom becomes the factor of paramount importance for human evolution Nechaev declared that the question of one's morality or immorality is to be decided by others. One's own immorality and sins, even if one admits to them, are not any longer one's own affairs, a matter of one's conscience, something between an individual and god. It is now a public affair – a crime to be defined, judged and dealt with by others.

So these are the meaning and implications of those two-dozen words in which Nechaev gave his definition of morality. They should not be treated lightly or altogether dismissed as those uttered by some crank some 120 years ago. Nearly half of the world population lives today in societies where these words have been successfully implemented, notably in the Soviet Union.

Anyone who has real knowledge of Soviet society, and especially the experience of living there, would immediately recognise the Dostoevsky novel as a prophetic work of a genius who saw what Ahriman had in store for mankind and what he was infusing through the Russian people. It took fifty years to sink through before it splashed out and contaminated the whole country and its people and then half of the world.

Since then, in Russia, there has been proclaimed and established only one morality, one ideology, one way of thinking compulsory for everyone. Untold atrocities have been committed under its aegis and in its name. It did change its name from time to time, and depending on the political climate it was called Revolutionary, Bolshevik, Soviet, Socialist, Communist ... But its essence and objective remained the same – coercion and total subjugation, i.e. the creation of the nation of *conformists*.

By and large it has been achieved – by means of the total ban and eradication of everything 'different' from what has been officially proclaimed and established as 'right'. As one wise Russian has put it, very pictorially: An operation has been performed on every Soviet citizen whereby his brain has been removed and a list of communist doctrines put in instead.

The success of this operation and the triumph of Ahriman's 'surgery' cannot be affirmed better than by a testimony of one of his 'patients', a Soviet writer, who said in his Stalin Prize novel:

Russia is treading its own path – that of a general uniformity of thinking. And we, Soviet people, for the first time have agreed among ourselves, we speak one language understandable to every one of us, we think identically about the main things in life. And this like-mindedness makes us strong, and in it lies our advantage over all people in the world who are torn apart and separated by the difference of opinions.

But if someone miraculously survives the operation and starts thinking for himself such a person is immediately denounced as someone 'who thinks differently', as a *dissident*. If he persists in his being different and even tries to live and act according to his 'different' views he is branded as 'anti' – anti-Revolutionary, anti-Soviet, anti-Communist, etc. and pronounced a criminal, a *terrorist* who wants to undermine and destroy what 'everyone else' is building. It is obvious to 'everyone else' that such a person should be isolated from the rest of society and severely punished if not by death then by being incarcerated. Or still better by being put into a psychiatric asylum because only a madman thinks and acts differently from the rest of society and does not want to contribute to general happiness and promote the revolution, socialism, communism, hospitals for handicapped children, etc.

So this is the nature and methods of Ahriman's work in the East, in Russia – a total subjugation of the individual and suppression, by sheer force, of his impulses towards the development of the true qualities of feeling, thinking and willing. This is

the nature and meaning of the phenomena of conformist, dissident and terrorist as experienced in Soviet society:

- *Conformist* is the one who renounces his individual thinking – he is an ideal and aspiration of the society;
- *Dissident* is the one who thinks for himself – he is considered 'the fifth column';
- *Terrorist* is the one who acts as an individual – he is proclaimed 'the enemy of the people'.

Here in the West these phenomena manifest themselves differently as different is Ahriman's work here. He knows only too well the difference that exists between various folk souls and their development and adjusts his mode of working accordingly.

So what weapon does he use then? How does he oppose and confront Christ in the West? These are very complex and deep questions, and full answers to them can only be given by initiation knowledge. But ordinary individuals can also have some inkling of the spiritual truth by trying to approach deep spiritual issues with their imaginative and intuitive power. Sometimes by simple parables, images or examples from ordinary life they can be helped to understand such issues and to unveil, if only slightly, their true meaning.

While contemplating Ahriman's opposition to Christ it seemed to me that the nature of his attitude in confronting Christ could be aptly described by the well-known words of a popular song – "Anything you can do I can do better!"

We can visualise how Ahriman says to Christ: "You want men to become free, but what is freedom for them? For centuries their best minds have been struggling to understand its meaning and arguing about it with each other. Some of them have even concluded that there is no such thing as freedom. By calling people to freedom you only confuse them because they know only too well that one's man freedom is another man's slavery. Now you sent to them your messenger who showed them that the way to freedom lies through moral imagination and ethical individualism. Do you really expect human beings to understand such things let alone achieve them? No, it's too complicated and difficult for them. I can offer something better instead which is easy to understand and achieve. You want freedom for man and call this age the Age of Freedom – I give them permissiveness and call this age the Age of Permissiveness and declare: Everything is permitted!"

"Everything is permitted!" – said one of the Dostoyevsky's characters, and we know whose words he was reproducing. But we also know that he did not reproduce them in full, because in full they go as follows – "Everything is permitted except that which leads to the development of the three qualities – true feeling, true thinking and true willing." That is what Ahriman is busy with in the West – replacing freedom with permissiveness and the three true qualities of man with their surrogates.

What often dwells in men as the unconscious or subconscious feeling of oneness with the world and aspiration to live in harmony with it the Leading Spiritual Powers want to be raised to the conscious awareness of the spiritual world and of men's feeling themselves as part of it. Ahriman who cannot stop such feelings taking place and developing seeks to divert them and change their substance. He says to man:

Why bother about some hypothetical and illusive world of spirit when you have around yourself a real and thriving world of matter? It is this world that both needs and sustains you. It belongs to you and you are an integral part of it. Unite yourself with it completely by accepting it in all its conditions and manifestations. This easily attainable and tangible harmony with your surroundings will make your life easy and give you peace of mind.

Thus Ahriman wants to confine men's life of feeling to the physical reality only, he wants to replace their trust in the great world order with the obedience to himself and turn their desire to live in harmony with the world-unity into conformity with the physical mode of existence. In other words, by corrupting their life of feeling Ahriman turns Western men into *conformists* – ideal citizens of his Kingdom.

To facilitate this process he attacks men not only from within, on the level of the individual, but also from without, on the level of society, by creating conditions in which man finds it difficult to be anything else but a conformist. These conditions are nothing other than *bureaucracy* – a network of various structures, institutions, organisations, rules, regulations, codes, established routines and practices, conventions and hierarchical principles within which an individual loses himself and feels powerless and insignificant. As a result he becomes apathetic, dull and cynical and finds that the easiest, most advantageous and secure, or even the only possible way of existence for him is to go thoughtlessly with the flow, i.e. to become an accomplished conformist.

Conformity, as a phenomenon, penetrates all spheres of life, notably the cultural sphere where it takes the form of mass culture. But Ahriman knows that in the West he cannot use conformity as an all-powerful and universal weapon against all people in all spheres and circumstances of life. The sense of individuality is too strong in the Western man for him to succumb totally to conformity without being able to express his individuality, through thinking, in various spheres and circumstances. Here in the West Ahriman on the whole does not suppress individual thinking by force and coercion but uses against it a different but not less effective weapon – he makes individual thinking, and thereby the individual himself, irrelevant and obsolete.

Here again he attacks man from two directions, from within and from without. From within, on the level of the individual, Ahriman uses the same means by which he corrupts the quality of true feeling – he blocks the spiritual world for man and makes physical reality the only source of man's knowledge, experience and thinking. It is not only that physically-based thinking cannot perceive and recognise the spiritual entity – man's individuality – and sees him only as a physical product of nature. Physically-based thinking cannot penetrate to the objective and unifying foundation of reality and therefore reflects it in a diversity of different, unrelated or even contradictory ideas. It cannot produce anything else because that is what its source, physical reality, is without the underlying spiritual foundation – a multitude of unrelated objects.

When man applies such ideas to cultural/spiritual/social spheres of his life he himself cannot but feel and recognise their subjective nature and relative value. To no ideas whatsoever, including his own, will he ascribe the qualities of undoubted truth and objectivity. But without such qualities thinking hardly amounts to anything more than a physiological function.

For attacking individual thinking and the individual himself from without, on the level of society, Ahriman uses what constitutes one of the best achievements, and the pride of the Western world, the institution of *democracy*. Providing men with the possibility of expressing and exchanging freely their views and ideas this institution is capable of stimulating and deepening individual thinking. However, without spiritual substance sustaining its principles and life the institution of democracy is nothing more than a lifeless structure for equally lifeless and mechanical activity which man's thinking is today.

Under this structure thinking ceases to be individual and becomes political, as man ceases to be an individual and becomes a partisan. No longer is the ancient 'Out of debate the truth is born' applicable to the current democratic process and its ideal. Instead of truth modern debate leads to fragmentation, confusion and alien-

ation. Thus so-called 'democratic freedoms' highly and rightly praised in the West in actual fact serve Ahriman's objectives very well.

Ironically it is in Russia, in the Soviet Union bereft of democracy, that they recognise the value and power of individual ideas. That is why the Ahrimanic authorities there fear them, ban them, and punish, even kill for them those who 'think differently', who are dissidents. While in the West where everyone can think and say whatever they like individual ideas have very little value indeed and nobody believes in their real power in life. Everyone can 'think differently' and is therefore a dissident by definition. Even the word 'dissident' is hardly ever used in this sense. For example, when the four prominent members of the Labour Party left it to form their own political party or a group of miners left the National Union of Mineworkers to form a different trade union nobody called these people dissidents – they were called respectively 'The Gang of Four' and 'The Breakaway Union'.

However it is not the words that matter here but the phenomenon they reflect. The diversity of views and ideas characteristic of Western society have one thing in common – they are by and large the product of materialistic thinking. As such they are within Ahriman's domain, and their development consists in their multiplication within it rather than in the dissension from it.

At the same time they do constitute a dissent – from thinking as spiritual activity, that thinking which is in accord with the spiritual foundation of the world. So it can be said that as far as the true quality of thinking is concerned people in the West are predominantly *spiritual dissidents* led in their dissent by the Supreme Dissident, Ahriman.

While the triumph of Ahriman's leadership in the East, in Russia, finds its best confirmation and verification through representatives of the cultural/ideological sphere, the most important in the Soviet Union, here in the West, in the UK, it is manifest, in particular, through politicians as representatives of the most influential domain of Western life. Nobody can testify better to the debasement and devaluation of individual thinking and the individual himself than the one who is the very personification of individual standing and independent statesmanship in British political life – Enoch Powell (a prominent 'right-wing' politician and parliamentarian). Here is his testimony:

My perception of society, perhaps paradoxically for a person so ready to pursue his own ideas and his own thoughts wherever they may lead him, is wholly social, that is to say, about institutions. I can't think about mankind except by starting with society. I can't think, in a way, which is evidently congenial to many people, by starting with the individual. I don't start my train of thought with propositions about an individual. I start with propositions about a society.

The same view rendering the individual insignificant is held by another prominent politician and parliamentarian but one who is on the opposite side of the political scale – Tony Benn. When he was promoted to the Labour Party leadership for his distinguished individual qualities and ideas, and on some other occasions, he emphasised that it is not individuals and their ideas that matter but rather adopted principles, policies, party manifestos, etc. It is remarkable how both of these distinguished and very individualistic and independent politicians holding opposite political views are united in their negation of the individual as a prime principle of life and society. They just cannot see the individual for organisations, unions, society, principles, policies, programmes, etc. Such individual-blind people, politicians, dominate and lead the Western societies while individual- and spirit-blind thinking permeates every aspect of Western life.

Having achieved this Ahriman can whole-heartedly support and encourage the Christian impulse for men to transform their ideas into ideals, ideals into will impulses and those into deeds. He knows only too well what kind of impulses and actions can result from ideas and thinking grounded in *his* domain – it would be *his* impulses and actions promoting *his* objectives.

It is rather rare nowadays that these objectives are openly declared and pursued by Ahriman's adherents. It is more often that they are clothed in Christian, lofty and moral garments, promoted under the disguise of true spiritual impulses and principles and carried out by people totally oblivious of them. The aforementioned Tony Benn could be the point in case.

He points to human conscience as guidance for human actions declaring that 'conscience is above law'. As for the laws which one considers immoral he calls for their violation, for civil disobedience. He also quotes St. Augustine's famous words, "Love god and do what you will", where for a non-religious person the notion of god can be substituted with some social, cultural or political ideals. In other words, Tony Benn gives the following advice to his fellow-men seeking guidance for right actions in our complicated and difficult time: "Follow your conscience, your sense of morality, your ideals and do what you will even if your actions would contradict current laws and conventions."

This sounds like a Christian principle of spiritual freedom. In fact it would have been one had not Tony Benn and others assumed that they can fill it with whatever content they fancy. They think that the words 'love god' are synonymous with the words 'follow the cause' and do not know their true, and only, meaning for modern man. Had they been aware of the true meaning of freedom, had they been acquainted with the philosophy of spiritual freedom, they would have known that love is not a blind force. On the contrary, true love is based on knowledge. To love god means today to know god, to know His ways, more specifically to know His moral, spiritual laws that govern our evolution. For the one who knows them doing 'what one wills' means only one thing – acting in accordance with them, towards their fulfilment.

Instead Tony Benn's, physically-based, Ahriman's morality, conscience and ideals which should constitute the basis for one's actions are of a completely different nature – they are political, or social, or national, or are derived from some other sectarian causes or interests. As such they inevitably come into conflict with other principles, and the actions they prompt unavoidably impinge upon other interests – individual, group, national or even international.

In fact the life of modern society is nothing other than a multitude of all types of small and big conflicts where different interests collide with each other. Everyone involved in these conflicts knows that his or his group's interests can be achieved only at the expense of others – this is Ahriman's social law. In some situations a compromise is possible when both sides are prepared to forego to a certain extent their own interests. But in many cases – and their number continually increases – the conflicts and circumstances are such that a compromise is unattainable, and one set of interests has to be achieved at the expense of others.

This is the situation in which every individual finds himself today, or better to say, is thrust into by Ahriman. Being also blinded by Ahriman he does not even look for a way out. At best he would ask himself, how far he is prepared to go in the pursuit of his interests. But for a true pupil of Ahriman there is no such dilemma. He knows that there are no unifying universal human interests, only conflicting sectarian ones, and only the strongest and most dedicated who is prepared to stop at nothing can successfully assert his.

If he needs any moral justification for his actions the pupil of Ahriman can derive it from his principle which is the combination of those declared by Sergey Netchaev and St. Augustine: "Everything that promotes the triumph of my cause is

moral, and if I love my cause I can do what I will to secure its triumph." If this principle is followed then such human qualities as dedication, idealism, steadfastness, courage, fervency and will power, very positive in themselves and sought after, become a weapon against one's fellow-men, an instrument of *terrorism*.

In the broadest sense of the word a terrorist is someone who in the pursuance of his interests and objectives sacrifices those of other people. Violence and murder are only specific and extreme manifestations of that particular will-quality of the individual which, untouched by true feeling and understanding, by true knowledge, becomes a heartless, lifeless, dehumanised drive mechanically propelling towards its target regardless.

This dehumanisation and mechanisation of the human will from the inside, on the level of the individual, which ultimately leads to terrorism is enhanced by the Ahrimanic attack on it from the outside, on the society level, which takes the form of *totalitarianism*. This phenomenon is not limited to a particular group, or government, or country. In a wider sense totalitarianism means the legitimisation of power, force and violence as an accepted means for achieving desired objectives and solving conflicts, both on national and international levels.

This legitimisation takes various forms, from the very mild like the existence of 'pressure groups', 'lobbies', etc. to the exercise of war, and it is reflected in current political thinking, vocabulary and ideals, such as 'balance of power', 'power sharing' and such like. But perhaps most vividly its existence and effects can be illustrated by what is regarded and accepted as an inalienable part of Western life and society and a clear expression of its democracy – by industrial strikes.

Whatever its origin and role in the past, today everyone recognises that the strike is what its name says it is – a blow, a destruction and harm inflicted upon society as a whole and a number of individuals in particular. Yet it is exactly for this reason that the strike is not only widely used but has established itself as a legitimate legislated means for achieving desired objectives and solving conflicts. It is remarkable and tragic at the same time that in the civilised Western world at the end of the 20th century in such an important sphere of life as economics which concerns every individual, it is only through violence and force that man can ultimately make himself heard, and listened and responded to by others.

When people are driven to such actions through their belligerence, or inability to find other means, or inertia, or fear, we know that Ahriman has been working on them from the inside, on an individual level. We can recognise his working on the level of society when he creates circumstances driving people to strike: incomprehensible and desperate situations, bitter conflicts and confrontations, coercion and intimidation. In particular he uses in this case his favourite method of distortion, deception and diversion: what intrinsically belongs to the individual moral sphere – one's attitude to the use of force and violence – he has shifted into the public sphere of legislation. So in Western society resorting to the destructive weapon of strike is not a matter of personal moral decision and responsibility. It all has been taken care of by laws and established procedures applicable to all and everyone for them to follow.

When we hear strikers saying, 'We regret any inconvenience caused to the public (passengers, patients, pensioners, children, etc.), *but ...* ' we know that these words are but lip service to the dead individual morality. Because if one genuinely regrets what one is doing one just does not do it. 'But' in this case is not just one's excuse for doing harm; it is a sign of one's allegiance to Ahriman and also a disguise under which Ahriman himself operates.

Thus we can see that Ahriman has a firm grip and control on man's qualities of feeling, thinking and willing. In fact it is a grip on the individual himself and his activities extended to all spheres of life and covering both hemispheres. The truth of the

matter is that we live in the world dominated and ruled by Ahriman – we live in Ahriman's world. The world itself is not Ahrimanic, it is Divine, but the domain of man's physical abode has been taken over by the Ahrimanic powers.

It is an inevitable outcome of the past human evolution, its unavoidable stage. The recognition of this fact should not cause undue pessimism or despair. On the contrary, it should prompt our enhanced inward and outward activity. To be conscious and meaningful such activity should have its source in the answers to the two questions which arise in the soul facing today's reality: 'What can and should the individual do to liberate himself from the vices of Ahriman and ally himself with the Christ's impulses?' and 'If Ahriman is a ruler of our world where can the individual find Christ?'

These two questions, and answers to them, are inseparable. As no individual today can escape Ahriman's grip and avoid his pernicious influence so everyone who wishes to liberate himself from Ahriman's shackles and overcome his influence and develop the three true soul qualities can achieve it only through Christ. Many feel it, if only instinctively, and search for Christ asking the question which can be heard nowadays in various Christian quarters, 'Where is Christ today?'

To find an answer, some resort to studies, some to meditations. No doubt appropriate books or prayers can lead one towards Christ. But Christ can and perhaps should also be sought in yet another source – His presence and working should be discerned and recognised in that spiritual and physical environment in which one has been placed by destiny. My own such environment in my formative years was Russia and her culture, particularly her literature, and it is from there that I tried to derive my answer as to the presence of Christ in our earthly human affairs.

Russia is famous for its literature, for its outstanding writers and brilliant poets. A distinguished feature of Russian literature, poetry in particular, is its connection with, and reflection of the deepest questions of life as they are experienced by the Russian soul. Therefore its role is particularly important in transitional and difficult times when the Russian people turn to their literature and poetry for guidance, for better understanding of themselves and the events they live through.

The beginning of the 20th century was exactly such a time, and as it happened, during that very time there lived in Russia a constellation of illustrious poets. One of the best, or some might say the best among them, was Alexander Blok. Like nobody else could he feel the pulse of his time. One has the impression that the time itself, with its turbulent events and daunting foreboding, was throbbing through Blok and his poetry. It is for this reason that another great Russian poet and Blok's contemporary, Anna Akhmatova, called him 'a tragic tenor of our epoch'.

Among other things, Blok lived through the dramatic events of the Russian revolution, which he not only witnessed but also deeply experienced. As a result he wrote a poem, which he called *The Twelve*. The day he finished the poem he wrote in his diary, "Today I am a genius". If we bear in mind that Blok was not, on the one hand, unduly immodest, and on the other, limited in his choice if he wanted to single out some of his poetry, we should realise what importance he himself attached to this poem.

The poem was written a few weeks after the October Revolution had started and when it was still in full swing. In it, in a picturesque poetic form, Blok depicted the polyphony of the revolutionary events as a dramatic and violent transition from the old order and way of life to a new one.

The twelve are the revolutionary guards who guard the difficult birth of the new world and life, protecting it from its enemies, and from the death convulsions of the old regime. Poorly dressed and fed, armed with rifles, they march through winter nights around the revolutionary town keeping vigil, looking for enemies, merciless in their determination, ready to shoot at sight and kill anyone they deem enemy of the

revolution. In the event they do kill a woman, and although she was innocent and was shot by mistake they express no regret at her death.

The most extraordinary episode in this poem, which reflected the revolutionary events as Blok saw, heard and experienced them, was its final scene. It puzzled readers at the time, and even now, nearly seventy years later, literary critics continue to argue about its meaning giving it different interpretations. The scene is this. As the merciless guards tread through the pitch-dark night, through blizzard and cold, carrying their rifles and looking for enemies – ahead of them and leading them, carrying a blood-red flag and wearing a wreath of white roses goes Jesus Christ.

It seems unbelievable – Jesus Christ leading armed and violent revolutionaries who do not hesitate to kill people, even innocent ones. Though for different reasons both the supporters of the revolution and its opponents found the Christ's association with it difficult to understand and accept. Even Blok could not explain why and how Jesus Christ emerged in his poem in front of the revolutionary guards on patrol; in fact he was convinced that there "should have been the other" instead – 'the other' being of course the Adversary, Antichrist, Ahriman.

Readers and critics might indeed be puzzled or even indignant, Blok himself could be uncertain but Christ's appearance in his poem in front of the revolutionary guards was not arbitrary or fortuitous – it was brought about by his art and the intuition of a great poet, by his poetic genius. To understand its guidance we should try to go beyond the appearance of what Blok depicted in his poem and penetrate into its essence. More specifically we should look beyond the twelve's manifest severity and ruthlessness into what lived in their souls and hearts and motivated and inspired them.

If we did so we would discover that as they marched through darkness and blizzard in their tireless search for enemies those severe and determined people suffering from the cold, hunger, deprivation and injustice were firmly convinced that theirs was the *way towards truth and life*. When people are motivated by such sincere impulses it means they have within themselves, and are guided by, the Christ's impulses Who said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life". They have Christ in front of them as their leader and guide, and Blok's twelve were no exception.

But what about when they were shooting and killing people, even in the name of their high ideals, even in fulfilment of their sincere impulses? Was then Christ also leading them? Of course not, He could not possibly lead people to murder. So where was He while they were committing their violent deeds? Did He withdraw, did He leave and abandon them? No, He could not do that either for He connected Himself with all earthly affairs and all deeds of men forever as He Himself pledged, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world". This pledge was made to the twelve as well whom Christ led towards the truth and new life. But when they were actually committing atrocities and other similar acts He was not in front of them but by their side praying for them and taking upon Himself their sins.

So this is where Christ is today – He is with us, in our lives, connected with everything we feel, think and do. If our thoughts, impulses and deeds are right and good then Christ is in front of us leading and inspiring us. If we do something wrong or harmful then Christ moves to our side and helps us by praying for us and taking upon Himself the pernicious consequences of our wrongdoing. He never abandons us, nor does He place himself behind us pushing us to the right things or pulling us back when we do something wrong. Compulsion and imposition are not His way, His being that of freedom and trust, which He bestowed upon men.

This gift of Christ is a blessing and the burden at the same time for every individual is faced today with an ultimate choice and decision crucial for his own and all mankind's future – whether to associate himself with the Supreme Dissident, the prince of this world, or with the Supreme Leader of Mankind, the Son of man. The

association with Ahriman means the promotion of his power and rule and requires the surrender to him of one's freedom and subjugation of one's feeling, thinking and willing – an easier and tempting but tragic path into the future. The association with Christ means the advancement of His Kingdom here on earth and requires the development, out of one's freedom, of the true qualities of feeling, thinking and willing, a much more difficult path into the future, but the only secure one.

The one who consciously chooses it and takes upon oneself the arduous task of developing the above qualities can be helped, in a most concrete and practical way, by examining, on the one hand, how the three impulses responsible for the development of the three human qualities have entered our evolution, and on the other, how these impulses actually turn into the qualities themselves.

The impulses have entered our evolution through the deeds of Christ thus becoming spiritual laws of human evolution. We know that deeds of Christ are unique and archetypal at the same time. They are unique because they establish spiritual laws, and they are archetypal because since the law has been established it is applicable to every human being. Therefore it is so important to know, and to understand, deeds of Christ.

When Christ said that He "came not to destroy, but to fulfil" the law He declared His conformity to the spiritual law which had created the Earth and had since been governing its evolution. But by saying that His "Kingdom is not of this world" He declared that He had brought into this evolution something new which as yet had to find its way into it. He knew it would not be easy because of the opposition of the Supreme Dissident. It is this Supreme Dissident who proclaimed Christ a dissident, a rebel, a criminal, a terrorist and in the end condemned Him to death.

To overcome this opposition and to make the establishment of His Kingdom on the earth possible Christ had to act, to combat the adversary forces, which dissented from the main stream of evolution. Therefore Christ's message to them was – "I came not to send peace, but a sword". But what was His sword, what sacrificial act was He going to commit with its help? Did He actually commit it? Indeed He did, and it resulted in death, and in the process He was condemned as a criminal. But who did He sacrifice to achieve His objective and to rebuff His opponents? Those very opponents, or their allies, or somebody else?

The truth of the matter was that there was nobody and nothing Christ could sacrifice because everybody and everything in the world belongs to Him and is embraced by His infinite love. But sacrifice it was – of Himself, the only one possible for Him and the only one, which leads not to death and destruction but to resurrection and new life.

This is how the three impulses, the three spiritual laws – of conformity to the governing evolutionary law, of introducing a new principle in opposition to the dominating adversary forces, and of an ultimate sacrificial act – have entered our human evolution. To see their actual working one should examine the lives of those individuals in human history whom we recognise as spiritual and lofty personalities, as best representatives of the human race, as teachers and helpers of mankind. The choice of such individualities is a personal matter but for those considering themselves students of anthroposophy Rudolf Steiner could definitely be chosen for this examination.

The study of Rudolf Steiner's life is in this respect of no less importance than the study of his works, for as his works reveal spiritual laws, his life confirms them.

From early childhood and throughout his whole life Rudolf Steiner showed a lively and avid interest in every aspect of life, culture and human activities, engaged himself into living relationships with numerous individuals and events that he encountered in life and sought every opportunity to extend his involvement with life and the

world. One can say that he wanted to absorb and embrace the whole world with which he strove to live in loving harmony and unity.

Yet when the time came for him to bring to this world his unique message which was totally new to it and therefore largely unacceptable causing discomfort, creating tension, undermining relations and disturbing harmony Rudolf Steiner had no hesitation or reservation in delivering it. He never sacrificed or betrayed it, or sought a compromise at its expense, and despite a continuous opposition verging on an outward hostility, and a lack of support, he was carrying it for a quarter of a century with remarkable courage and determination.

When the opposition became too strong threatening his own mission and imposing a battle on him, Rudolf Steiner had to take the challenge and combat the onslaught by an outward, as well as inward, action. What was this action or what could such an action be of someone whose entire life was devoted to the whole of mankind and for whom there were no personal, or sectarian, or any other divisive interests? Rudolf Steiner did not fight, or counterattack, or even defend himself against his 'enemies'. Others held him as enemy, but his universally human message and mission precluded such designations as 'personal enemies' and any action of a destructive, harmful or divisive nature. Instead his ultimate action was exclusively positive, universally beneficial and, most significantly, sacrificial by its very nature.

Thus the study of the life of Jesus Christ, as well as of Rudolf Steiner or some other such personalities, can teach us how spiritual laws essential for our development enter our evolution and become its real driving forces. These lives teach us by providing concrete living examples for our personal development and activities. We know that to acquire the three soul qualities we have to go through the three stages of development universal by their nature but individual in their actualisation.

When during one's earthly abode one becomes aware of and begins to experience consciously one's physical and cultural environment one has to discern what in it is the working and manifestation of the evolutionary spiritual forces and should associate and unite oneself with it in loving and harmonious relationship. Nobody can point these phenomena to him or define their nature and scope – it is his sole responsibility to designate that part of the world with regard to which he can consider himself a *conformist*.

Then one should make another discovery, this time internal. One should disclose within oneself that unique impulse, that individual mission which everyone is carrying within oneself and which one brought from the spiritual world to implement here on the earth. These individual impulses and missions are not just people's private properties; they belong to the whole of mankind. It is through these individual impulses and missions that the new enters our evolution; in fact they are the driving forces of evolution. Therefore to discover them is one's obligation not only to oneself but also towards mankind and the spiritual world.

Having made this discovery one has another obligation – that of fulfilling the intentions one has brought from the spiritual world. The first step towards their fulfilment is to take a stand in the world and 'declare' them. The character of the stand and 'declaration' depends, in the first place, on the nature of one's impulses and mission, but one thing is certain. Whatever form one's stand and declaration take, whatever one's impulses and mission, they are bound to come up against severe opposition. Everything genuinely positive and new which has its origin in the world of spirit is opposed by the old, by the established adversary forces unwilling to yield their grounds. If one is a bearer of such genuine impulses then with regard to these Ahri-manic forces one becomes a *dissident*.

The form the opposition takes can vary. It could be an outward hostility of other people, or a lack of support and understanding on the part of one's friends, or one's circumstances of life, or one's personal limitations. In any case one should confront

the opposition, and try to combat and overcome it. How? The danger of this confrontation lies not only in the strength of the opposing forces but also in the weakness of the one trying to overcome them. One particular weakness consists in an excessive concentration of these forces when the means to overcome them are inadvertently borrowed from the self-same forces. Then one responds to them by sending out one's bitterness, frustration, anger, accusations, condemnations and insults, and, ultimately, bullets, grenades and bombs – in other words by harming and sacrificing others, i.e. by becoming a *terrorist*.

To avoid this danger one should follow the spiritual law according to which, for genuine spiritual impulses to be successful they should be fulfilled, and opposition to them should be overcome, through actions, which by nature are positive, universally beneficial and sacrificial. It should become a human ideal for all aspirations and activities to culminate in such actions. Having established their universal spiritual principles, their actual attainment and concrete application is a matter of individual achievement and responsibility. As nobody can define for us the terms 'positive', 'universally beneficial' or 'sacrificial', so nobody can designate our actions as such or choose for us such actions. Here we are left entirely to our own devices. There are two experiences however which everyone faced with a difficult decision can have and which can serve as guidelines for taking such a decision.

One experience has a universal character, which again can be established through the examination of lives of outstanding spiritual personalities, but in particular of the life of Christ. It is expressed by Christ Himself in the following words uttered when He was committing His sacrificial deed on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is the feeling of loneliness, of being forsaken, of being on one's own in the whole world – in the most difficult and decisive moment of one's life. (Was not Rudolf Steiner experiencing similar feelings after the fire of the first Goetheanum and when he had to take a decision to found a new Anthroposophical Society under his leadership without prior consultation with and consent of the leading spiritual powers?)

So when faced with crucial decisions and undertaking decisive actions we have nobody to help us or advise, or even encourage or console; when we feel abandoned by everyone and have to rely exclusively on our own judgement and inner strength, and to bear alone the full consequences of our decisions and deeds, then we may regard it as an indication of being in a right situation sponsored by the spiritual world.

For the other experience there are no analogies or examples, it has to be created purely out of one's own inner resources. But then it provides the best guideline and help when one decides to act. The experience is the counsel one takes with oneself with the utmost earnestness and honesty.

One should question one's motives for the proposed action, one's knowledge and understanding of the situation one is in, and one's feelings for those who are going to be affected by the action. Whatever one managed to achieve in developing the true soul qualities comes now into focus and resolves itself into this action. Whether, as a consequence of it, one might be regarded and treated by others as a conformist, or a dissident, or a terrorist (radical) should be of no consideration to him. The only thing he should consider as an ultimate factor for his decision to act is his own answer to the following question he puts to himself:

By taking this decision and committing this action where do I place Christ? By my side burdening Him with my wrongdoing and promoting Ahriman's rule on the earth? Or do I place Christ in front of me as my leader helping Him to establish His Kingdom on the earth and to redeem the Supreme Dissident?