

A WORD OF INTRODUCTION

As it is well known, an author's credentials are his writings and not what he tells about himself. But in this instance, for the sake of my anthroposophical readers, I will have to make an exception – a sort of an admittance of the reader into the author's world. For this, I will employ the imagery so close to the anthroposophical heart. My imagery is simple, you could even say commonplace.

Here I am at home, sitting in a room that serves both as my study and my library. The walls are lined with book cases and shelves laden with books. One is particularly precious and sacred to me. Here I keep books of a deeply spiritual nature. I take one of them from the shelf and soon I am deeply engrossed. Straightaway the book transports me to other worlds, to another life, to sublime heavenly beings and events. Then I finish reading, replace the book on the shelf, and still under its spell I leave the house.

I am out in the street and the contrast between it and my inner state crashes over me and this contrast, the shock of it, awakens me to the surrounding reality. And it is so familiar, so habitual – our earthly world. Here too are events and beings, but they are our, earthly ones. Here there is noise and jostling, cursing and laughter, happiness and grief, kindness and cruelty, friendship and enmity, love and betrayal. But it is specifically here, on this street teeming with life, and not in the tranquillity of my study, anthroposophy begins, lives and takes on meaning for me. Therefore, in this sense, I can call myself a "street anthroposophist" or an "anthroposophist of the street". I will try to explain what that means specifically – to myself personally and, in this instance, to my readers, because my "being of the street" affected, one way or another, – it could not be otherwise – my works.

Every anthroposophist is familiar with the experience of how anthroposophy, having once burst into his life, turns it completely upside down. But it does so inside the person, externally everything remains the same. And even if before, you already felt something akin to a contrast, a conflict, a discord between the inner content of your life and what was going on around you, then now the discrepancy between the anthroposophy that lives in you and what occurs in life and in the world becomes obvious. What also becomes obvious is that, first of all, this discrepancy – between that which is and that which should be – is not something personal, concerning you only, but the problem of our times that requires solving; that it can only be solved by changing and having changed the existing reality, and that finally to change it, within achievable limits, has to be done by yourself – with the help of anthroposophy.

From the very beginning, even before the first joyful shock of encountering anthroposophy had not passed, when its vague outlines had only just started emanating in the soul, when its meaning for myself and mankind could only be guessed at, when inner feelings, but not yet personal experience and knowledge, pointed to its truth and vitality – even then my immature and timid aspirations aimed at "implementing anthroposophy into life". And it became, in all its imperfection and original vagueness, my main anthroposophical leitmotif.

The most important and the most difficult form of implementation – changing oneself – in this instance, I will take out of the equation. I am deliberately omitting this topic. And even though I know full well that without such an internal change, all other "changes of the world" will become invalid, I do not feel within my rights to talk about things that can only be talked about on the basis of personal experience and achievements. But I will touch upon another sphere of internal activity – the sphere of knowledge, anthroposophical knowledge

Any anthroposophist knows (but it is not understood by others), that anthroposophy, like life itself, cannot be learned, it can only be studied. One's whole life, which most anthroposophists do. But what do they do with their knowledge? Merely asking such a question may appear farfetched to some, but for me it is not so, and this is where my "streetness" comes through. Knowledge, despite an inner need

for it and a deep fulfilment and pleasure that it brings, I need not for the sake of accumulating it or gaining "erudition" (especially as someone aptly pointed out, "you can't take it with you to the spiritual world"). I need it, first and foremost, as a tool for *understanding*. The acquired knowledge and the gained understanding I need exclusively to bring, ultimately, to "the street", where they are needed, to apply them to life – *practically and specifically*. And there the sphere of their use is limitless – from everyday to world events. All that you meet in life has to be highlighted, explained and processed with the help of anthroposophical knowledge.

But what is most on the street of life is not "what" but "who", not the events themselves, but their originator and participant – man, people. It is them that I meet first of all, in a direct or figurative sense, when I go out on the street. Many pass me by without noticing or paying any attention to me, some, having bumped into me, apologise or curse, others look friendly and smile, while others address me with something, initiating a conversation. And I don't remain indifferent to their presence and their actions. In a word, I form a *relationship* with people and this immutable fact of life has resulted in my awareness and experience that *human relations* lie at the heart of everything that happens today on the Earth. And although the theme of human relations has hardly appeared in my works, it runs like a red thread through all my life.

This sphere of life is complex and multidimensional, but here too, as with everything else, you need to begin to cognize and act with that which is closest and most accessible – with the personal. This personal I once had to formulate in the most unexpected way, and under the most unexpected circumstances. We were staying with friends in New York, they were driving us somewhere and on the way, as you would expect, we were talking. Our wives, who were sitting in the back, had their own conversation, while my friend and I had our own. And so, in the process of the conversation he asks me a question, a simple one and typical among immigrants "How are you getting on with the English?" Depending on the people in question, it could have been Americans, the French, Israelis etc. But in my case this question carried greater weight, because unlike most immigrants, my life, in its various manifestations, took place almost exclusively among the local population, in an English environment.

And so, instead of giving my friend an equally simple answer, something like "alright", "so-so" or – what would have been the honest truth – "depends", surprising even myself, for I had never before expressed it that way, even to myself, I hear myself saying "You see Tolya, there exist three types, three levels of human relations. The first – those are relations with people we meet in life through destiny – family, neighbours, colleagues, etc. These are relations "of necessity" – sometimes they bring us joy, other times we are indifferent to them or they can even be a burden to us. The second level – these are relations with people that we ourselves choose from the stream of humanity that accompanies us in life. We choose them because they are close to our heart, because we feel a need to be with these people, whom we call our friends. Such relations, as a rule, come naturally, as if by themselves, and they can be very complicated, but this level is higher than the first. But the highest level is that when a human being, who discovers for himself in life something fundamental, that fills it with meaning and substance, finds a kindred spirit, who lives by the same values, and they become "brothers in spirit". What is more, if as well as this they become "soul brothers", friends, then this becomes the ultimate fulfilment of human relations.

Later I understood why I gave such an answer. Because, it was at that time that I was experiencing the joy of the third level of human relations and I clearly felt, especially in my new and unfamiliar English environment, the existence of all three levels, though prior to the conversation with my friend, this feeling had not arisen to the level of consciousness. (Previously in Russia destiny had given me a remarkable gift, lasting nearly ten years, when all three levels flowed into one). And it seemed to

me then, that at the highest, spiritual, level, as opposed to the others, physical and soul ones, there reigned a complete and unshakable mutual understanding, that here can be no conflicts or disagreements or anything negative or bad. This was not wishful thinking on my part – these were my real experiences at the time. But how naive I was, and how painful the disappointment, when in some cases, such a relationship did not stand the test of time!

I need to speak of this in more detail, because of what I witnessed and experienced here, goes far beyond the personal. But I will start, after all, with the personal. I was very lucky. To make friends at a mature age and especially in a foreign country is no mean feat. But thanks to anthroposophy, I formed a whole series of relationships of the third level, and some of them even included the second (though of an English version, which is not identical with a Russian one). When during such relationships differences of interpretation and understanding of some anthroposophical tenets occur, there is nothing wrong in that. The opposite is true, if the right approach is taken to such a disagreement, it can even enrich the adherents of different points of view.

But when a one discovers that some of his impulses, aspirations, ideas find no response from his spiritual brother, the situation becomes more difficult. Indeed, having shared with him something which is very important for him, he expects to find understanding, interest, support. But when he finds they are not there, he feels distressing disappointment. It was some time before I learned to extract from such an incomprehensible, at first, and hurtful indifference its objective element. It in no way justifies this indifference, which I considered and still consider unforgivable, but to know of this element that does exist, is also essential.

It occurs because anthroposophy opens up for us incredible vistas for thought and activity, and a countless number of paths and directions along which each of us can channel our anthroposophical interests. But only Rudolf Steiner, the creator of anthroposophy, could embrace all those paths and interests, whereas each of us can only manage but a small part of them. And there are very few of us anthroposophists in the world, so that if only even two of us fully share some thoughts and impulses, it should be considered a happy coincidence. (I am not talking here of fundamental anthroposophical tenets or about such public impulses as the Waldorf Education, or biodynamic agriculture. I am talking about those individual ideas and aspirations, that have only newly come into being or are just finding their way into the public domain.)

I would later have to explain this to others and even comfort them, seeing their bewilderment, unhappiness and disappointment that their appeals to brother anthroposophists fell on deaf ears. I would like to mention here one such occasion. One anthroposophist, having met me, straightaway started lamenting that he had no one to share his thoughts about, in his view, very important events of international significance. I said that I was ready to help him, that I would set up, in my home, a meeting with a group of very seriously minded anthroposophists, who were also interested in worldwide problems, to whom he could present his ideas and after the meeting stay the night, as he lived far away. And if his subject found a reciprocal interest with the group and they would like to pursue it further, then I would be prepared to continue to offer him my hospitality.

A number of such meetings took place, at which my new found acquaintance had the opportunity to present to those present the problem that so worried him and explain his thoughts on the matter. It became clear that the other participants did not share his thoughts and assessments and this was brought to an end at one of the meetings. Also, at this meeting, there occurred between this person and one of the group a personal disagreement, which had nothing to do with the subject matter of the meeting. But it became clear to all that this would be our last meeting. When everyone had gone and the two of us were left alone, he started to tell me, with great bitterness, of his disappointment (not over the disagreement, but the reaction to his presentation). On his face was genuine pain, when he asked me "Why is it that they

are so indifferent to such important questions?" I knew that "they" included myself, so it was not hard for me to give an answer.

I said that it was not so, that they were not indifferent to these questions, quite the opposite, they were greatly troubled by them. But they see them quite differently, their position regarding these questions is different, and their interest and concern about them are also expressed in a different way. And that what they heard from him at our meetings did not convince them and did not induce them to accept his point of view. I do not think that my interlocutor understood, or could at that moment understand, my words. He was so disappointed and agitated, that he said that he could not sleep and did not, as usual, stay the night, but went home, in the dark to his far off destination.

I felt sorry for him, but I didn't know what else I could have done – I could not pretend that I shared his views, when clearly I did not. At another time, when again I did not share the views of a colleague in anthroposophical work, I went even further in my attempt to help him. He had nurtured his ideas over many years and wished to lay them out in a book, but he did not have the possibility to write it, as he could not combine the work on the book with his work in an office. Then I suggested, that he leave his office job for a while and concentrate on his book, while I would try to find him sponsors and funds to support him during this time. He declined my offer, but that's another matter.

I mention all this because a divergence of our individual views and interests is understandable and even inevitable, but that does not mean that even in such cases we should not help and support each other. It is especially this lack of help and support, and even interest towards another's ideas and impulses that do not match your own – to those of your brother's in spirit – became for me one of the most bitter experiences in the anthroposophical milieu.

But what is truly tragic – both in human and in the wider anthroposophical terms – I consider the following situation, of which I had been either a participant or an observer on more than one occasion. And harmony of relations, and communality of impulses and ideas, and the confluence of specific aspirations and thoughts, and mutual enthusiasm – they all promise communal, fruitful work, not only giving pleasure and satisfaction to the participants, but also being of use to society. And in some instances such work is already taking place and is even beginning to bear fruit, but then something suddenly happens, explicitly or implicitly – and everything turns to dust. Only yesterday it seemed to the collaborators in the common cause that they could move mountains, while today there is no trace of the previous solidarity, if indeed it has not turned into animosity.

And if the reader says that he too is familiar with this situation, I would not be in the least bit surprised. How many glorious and promising anthroposophical ventures have ended in such a fashion, even going back to the times of Steiner! And there is no sign that anything is changing or will change in the foreseeable future. Perhaps a reader wise with experience may have an explanation for this phenomenon. For my part, anyway, I have heard more than once such an explanation – anthroposophical: this is the work of hostile, ahrimanic powers, it is they who destroy good intentions and sow discord and animosity between people.

I categorically reject such an explanation. Not because I don't believe in the presence, interference or the effectiveness of these powers. I not only believe, but know from personal experience of their skilled and successful work in this field. Furthermore, I accept this as a given, par for the course, like an inevitable and necessary factor, that accompanies any good anthroposophical initiative. If it is absent or does not show itself one way or another, that means that something is wrong with the initiative itself. It is exactly in the light of its constant and inevitable presence, that I cannot count it as responsible for the collapse of some initiative. The opposition of hostile powers a priori is inherent in all our good works and because of this, we ourselves must imbue our works with a countermeasure, neutralization of

these powers. It is like, say, knowing that there is bad weather outside, we need to dress accordingly. If we fail to do so and as a result catch a cold and become ill, we can hardly blame the weather.

Besides, Ahriman – is not rain or snow, which you can see with your own eyes, and even touch, and there are few that can directly oppose him. But the activity of people is accessible to our observation and analysis. Therefore, from my point of view, it is in the real words and deeds of real people (including your own, needless to say) that we should look for the reasons and explanations for what is happening, especially when it concerns the failures of joint endeavours. That is how I, at any rate, tried to act, albeit not always successfully. Sometimes such failures drove me to despair. In one instance, I was – to the point of pain – so distressed by the inadequacy of action by a friend, that I cried from the heart "Do you remember what we promised each other in the spiritual world? Why do you not do what you pledged?" My anthroposophist friend stared at me silent and perplexed, and I myself did not know why these words had escaped me. Neither he, nor I spoke of this again, neither then, nor later, and it sometimes seemed to me that it had not happened, that I had not uttered those words. But I had uttered them, although to this day I do not know how and why they had come to me in that moment.

I mentioned this incident because, it seems to me – no I am certain of it! – that anthroposophical relationships are not given to us karmically for nothing. They demand something from us, and first of all – recognition of one another, recognition of another as your spiritual brother, and also an realization, that once having met, we have to do something "anthroposophical" – either together, or for each other, or one for the other, whatever form this act takes. Alas, I have rarely witnessed such recognition and realization in the anthroposophical milieu, but unfortunately, have witnessed quite the opposite.

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For many years in the Soviet Union, I lived, as it were, in two worlds. One –ordinary, mundane, which I shared with millions of my fellow citizens, the other – my inner world, which was, to a small degree, also an outer one. This was, first and foremost, a world of anthroposophy, also a world of inner freedom in general, which found its expression in my own, contradictory to the official ideology, thoughts, judgements and actions, in the reading of banned literature etc. Externally this world found a rather limited outlet in social interaction with a very small group of similar "dissenters", but even among them I was alone (with one exception) when it came to anthroposophy.

You could not call these people like minded, because they held different views and had different interests, but their small world – a world of freedom – was very important to them. In the totalitarian suffocating atmosphere of lies and hypocrisy, this was a small space, where you could breathe fresh air. This spontaneously arisen world was entirely different from the environment around it – in its content, in its values and even in its language. It became particularly apparent, when someone from the "outside" world found their way there. I remember when once one of my "everyday" friends came to visit, and began to read some samizdat scattered on the table. He could not understand a word of what he had read, although he was an intelligent man. On another occasion I brought a old friend of mine, whom I had not seen for many years, to one of our many, by that time, "gatherings" (this was a farewell party for those leaving for Israel). Having entered the flat where the party was taking place, he found himself in a previously unknown world, whose existence he could not even imagine. He was completely lost, but not only because in that noisy and lively gathering of people he knew only me. He was at a complete loss to understand what was going on around him, what these people were talking about,

what they were discussing, why were they laughing, and how this all fitted into the world in which he had lived all his life and the only one he had ever known.

Something similar – living in two different worlds – I also experienced in England, but the difference was substantial. In England my two worlds were even geographically miles apart. The one – where I lived with my family (in the village of Forest Row), among hundreds of like-minded people, with many of whom I regularly socialised, where my children attended a Waldorf school, where there was an anthroposophical university (Emerson College), where there was anthroposophical medicine and pharmacology, where there was anthroposophical biodynamic agriculture and anthroposophical arts, where various anthroposophical initiatives flourished and various anthroposophical events took place. The other – where I worked and where, unable to afford a car for many years, I had to get to by bus and two trains, a journey that took me four hours; where I spent most of the week and had to rent lodgings, but where nothing – absolutely nothing! – reminded me of the first world and where my only interest lay in lecturing at a university.

How differently I experienced this duality in these two countries! In the Soviet Union, we were, at the time, a bunch of individuals. "renegades", "dissenters", "dissidents" – but only due to monstrosity of the existing regime. With the end of the regime this alienation should have come to an end as well, which is exactly what happened in reality, and in Russian society there now exist normal differences and opposition, although under conditions of old and new abnormalities and aberrations. The previous dissidents were not a political party, not an organisation, not some unified group, they did not represent anyone but themselves, and only one thing brought them together – a moral imperative.

The English anthroposophical community, of which I was a part, was something different. It too, of course, was not an organisation, let alone a party or a "sect", how some people ignorantly refer to it, but it was – and still is – a group of individuals who are united by a common spiritual outlook and are inwardly brought together by the common nature of their spiritual impulses. I, for one, clearly perceived it at the time as a new, nascent civilization, that has come to replace the existing one – which is dominant today and will be in the near future, but is already dying. And so, two real civilizations existed for me for real, and the contrasts of my life in both, and my daily transition from one to the other were acutely experienced by me. While questions of their co-existence, mutual influence, and most of all, the transformation of one into the other, acquired for me a concrete character.

In my internal experiences and thoughts at the time, I found a great comfort in the fact that in the newly discovered, multifaceted anthroposophical civilization, I had a close circle of friends, with whom I regularly met. They had known one another for many years and their relationships with one another varied. But my relationship with each and my disposition to each allowed me to gather us all for regular meetings. These meetings, for me, were the happiest events in my life (family and private life notwithstanding), they nourished me spiritually, life was worth living because of them. We did not use them to study the works of Steiner – other groups existed for this, which all of us attended according to our own interests. We just socialised, discussed any topics that were of concern to us (but obviously not about trivial subjects), we discussed various things, and over all this there reigned for me a sublime spirit of community, and there could be nothing higher and more wonderful than this.

This carried on until "one fine day", when something happened, insignificant in itself, but it affected me emotionally and influenced my train of thought (later I will relate another event similar to this in its impact). During one of our regular meetings, as usual, we were discussing something, and I, as usual, was enjoying the reigning atmosphere of closeness and mutual understanding. I don't remember the exact nature of the conversation, but during the discussing it transpired that one member of the group was a reader of The Guardian newspaper (which is of a liberal bent), while

another – The Daily Telegraph (which has conservative inclinations). And this fact immediately elicited a confrontation. And although this concerned only two members of the group, was short-lived and was undertaken in a dignified manner, it disturbed, albeit not for long, that special and sublime atmosphere of our meetings, which had seemed to me so unshakable.

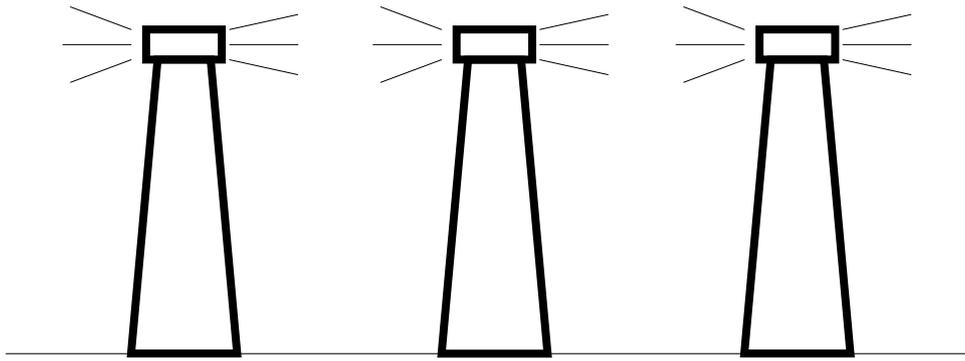
As I said, this small incident had a great impact on me, and after the meeting it wouldn't leave my thoughts and I kept asking myself: what has happened here and why? What is reality – that which unites us or that which divides us? Can they and should they coexist? How? Why at all do differences that divide us exist in the light of that sublime to which each of us had arrived in our own individual and at times very thorny way?

And here I would like to relate a second event, similar in its impact on me, which in its form and content had nothing in common with the first, but in time had preceded it. We had only recently moved from London to a new place, 30 miles to the South, so that we could send our children to the local Waldorf school, Michael Hall (as we later found out, it was the first and biggest of such schools in the English speaking world). Here, as both a parent and an anthroposophist, for the first time I came into contact with the practical application of anthroposophy. Everything was of great interest to me and I tried to enter into every aspect of school life, and I was fascinated and enchanted by my endless discoveries. Soon I began to take an active part in the life of the school, I was elected to various school bodies, I was a participant, and on occasion, the initiator of a number of undertakings, discussions etc.

That all came later, but the event that I want to relate, although connected to school life, happened before my involvement in it. It took place at the first general school meeting, which I attended. Under discussion was a very important and troubling to all question, which sharply divided the opinion of those present: should a new assembly-hall-cum-theatre be built, which would require a great sum of money and which the school did not have at the time, or the existing hall be extended and the money, should it ever become available, be used on other school needs. I myself, at the time, did not have an opinion on the matter and didn't even fully understand the division and the reason for such high emotions. But this lack of information allowed me to be a close observer of what was taking place – not rational, objective or subjective, because I could not make any considered judgements, but, if one can put it like that, an emotional one

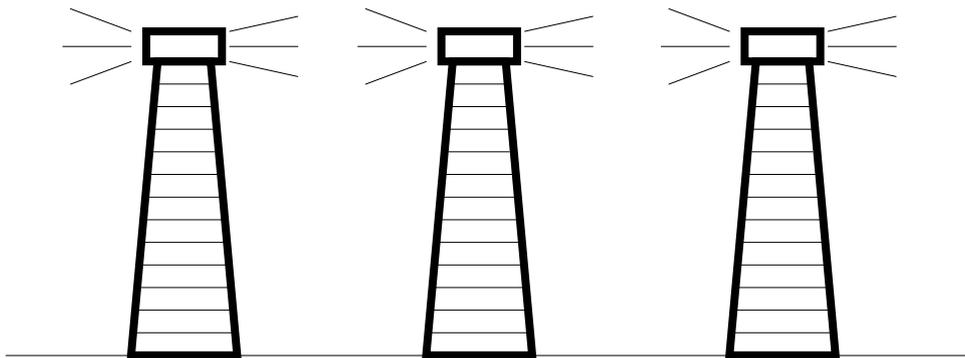
The place was packed and many of the audience spoke from where they sat, so that I had to turn first one way and then another to listen to them. Although I was not fully conversant, I tried to listen attentively and to understand each speaker, and as a result I formed a strange picture. The speakers, who represented different points of view, did not debate with one another or contest others' opinions, but simply stated their own. But their words did not meet with, their paths did not cross and did not affect one another, but as if with no contact, they passed each other by. It was as if people were talking about completely different topics. But that was not so, as there was only one subject under discussion, which they all had in common. Were they listening to and hearing each other? I think that they both listened and heard, but their conversation was not shared – each made their own point which was, as it were, about their own, but not about the shared topic.

For some reason, it was this subjective impression and not the contents of the speakers' presentations or even of the meeting as a whole, that made the stronger and more lasting impression that could have been expected. I periodically kept returning to it, and my imagination painted the following picture of the event: as if somewhere there were placed transmission towers, each broadcasting its own programme, like different radio stations. I even drew a picture of it on a piece of paper:

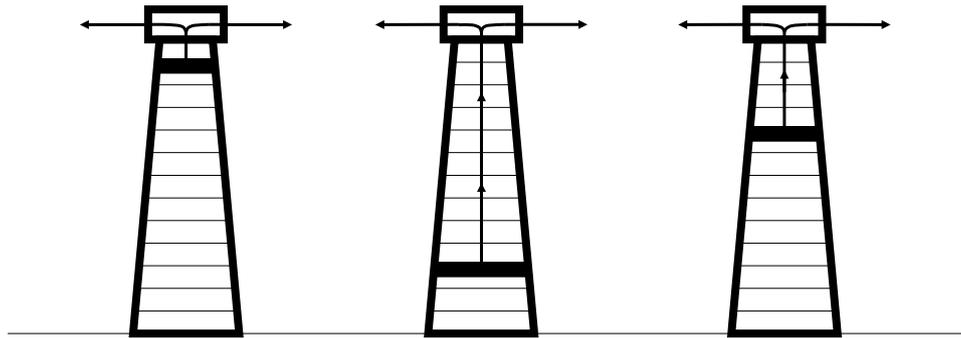


And when I now returned to that meeting in my mind, I got out that picture, so as to look again at the simplified image of my impressions, to examine it, trying to understand what had happened, as if in the hope that those people-towers would tell me something of themselves, of what they were broadcasting. And so it happened, something gradually started to reveal itself to me – in essence something rather obvious and as simple as the picture itself.

Indeed, their broadcasts were none other than an external expression of what was inside them. And inside was experience accumulated over many years, life events, thoughts, concerns, in other words many various components, layers which eventually form the internal contents of a human being. And this too I depicted in my picture, also simplified, by making each tower multilayered.



But this schematic image finally helped me to understand what had happened at the school meeting, and what had happened and was happening at many other meetings and discussions. Again, in a simplified way, it can be expressed in the following way: when we speak, it speaks one of our layers (see diagram below).



There are two types of these layers: those that are inherent only to ourselves and that distinguish and separate us from other people, and those that we share with others and which enable us to coexist and cooperate with each other. The speakers at the school meeting spoke from their common layers – and it was then obvious that they spoke about the same topic, and from their individual ones – then they spoke about something of their own. When our group met, we always spoke from the common layers, maintaining our unity, until that time when two of us spoke from their individual ones – and immediately the unity was broken.

Does that mean, that to attain unity, to find a common language, we must deny that which is personal, individual? But precisely the development in oneself of an individual and of individual thinking is the code of our times, an evolutionary necessity, and our personal experience - is our most valuable achievement and our treasure. How can we discard or sacrifice it all for anything, even something with a higher purpose? Of course we can't and it wouldn't be possible! So how do we, while protecting that which is personal and individual to us, find a common language? Is it even realistic?

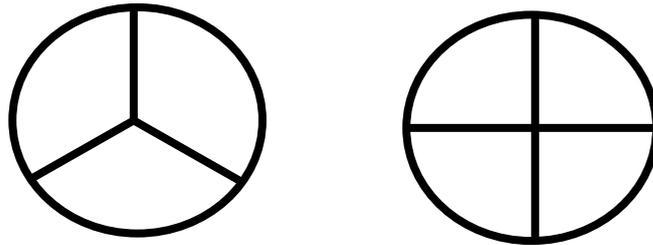
For me these were not idle or theoretical questions, but the most practical and vital. Because, especially at that very time, I along with others, was involved in real joint ventures, events and situations, which without such a common language would either not have found solutions, or failed, or turned into something bad and destructive. And since most of these situations were anthroposophical, I couldn't help but think, that if anthroposophists, who have the best assistance in the world – spiritual, cannot resolve these issues, then what hope is there for the rest?

So it was, preoccupied with such thoughts and, you could say, a hopeless search of a "common language" that I lived at the time, not knowing from where and how I might get an answer or get help. But help did arrive of its own accord – and as often happens in these instances, unexpectedly and from an unexpected source. This source happened to be my own son. We were once sitting, the whole family, around the dinner table, eating and talking. Our lunch or dinner was nearly finished, when my son, with no relation to the conversation that we were having, but in connection with his school life, suddenly asked "Papa, I don't understand, what is a common denominator?" The question was unexpected, but required an immediate answer.

My gaze fell on a round pie that was sitting on the table, it was cut into slices and this prompted my answer. I took a sheet of paper and a pencil and said to my son, that would now tell him and illustrate a short story. Here is that story

In a shop there were two pies sitting on a shelf. They had only that morning been delivered from the bakery. They were round, beautiful, of the same size and were decorated with golden strips of pastry, which divided them one into three, the other into four equal parts.

I drew this on the paper (see image below) and then proceeded with my story.

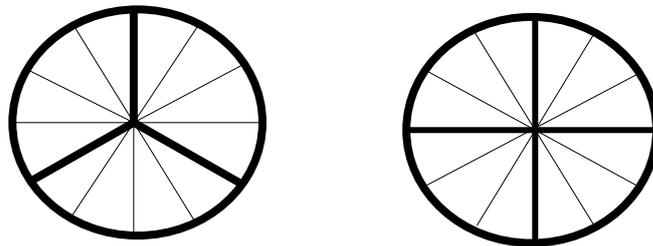


All the other products really liked the pies and they called them twins. But the pies themselves did not like that name. They did not consider themselves twins, nor the same, nor even looking like each other. They were very proud of their different divisions, and each considered its divisions and itself the most important. Therefore, as soon as they had been delivered and placed on the shelf, they started bickering with each other as to who was the most important.

Both of them not only considered themselves the most important, but wanted to be recognised by the other products as such. But no one could confirm this, nobody knew which to consider the most important and why, and in any case they all wanted to reconcile them. But the pies didn't want to be reconciled and continued to argue. Soon all the other products were so fed up with their arguing, that they said to the pies: "We can't pass judgement, but we do know who can – the baker who baked you. He definitely knows, which of you is the most important. Go to the bakery, tell him of your argument, and he will settle it immediately. And when you return, you can tell us which of you is the most important and why". The pies agreed to this and without any delay set off for the bakery.

The baker was very surprised to see them. He was even troubled, thinking that he had done something wrong, and the pies had been returned to be fixed. But having found out what was wrong, he calmed down, smiled and said that he could indeed help the pies establish which was the more important, but first they had to do something for him. This did not sit well with the pies, as they did not like to do anything but argue with each other. Still, they asked what was it that they could do for him. To this the baker replied, that what they had to do was not for him, but for each other. They liked that even less - having to do something for the other. But when they understood, that there was something in it for them too, they wanted to know, what specifically they had to do for the other, and what the other would do for them, in turn. But the baker said, that he would only tell them after they had promised to carry out his instructions. If they did not wish to meet his conditions, he would no longer talk to them, and immediately send them back to the shop.

There was nothing for the pies to do, but agree. After all, they could not possibly return to the shop empty handed, and besides each of them wanted for the baker himself, as quickly as possible, to confirm itself as the most important. And for this one could suffer a little, and do a little something for the other. Having gained their consent, the baker said "To establish which of you is the most important, you must share with the other that which you have and the other does not, while the other must accept this gift". The two pies looked at each other, then at the baker and said that they did not understand what he was talking about. He out of all people knew full well, that they were made from the same flour, that their filling was the same, so what could they possibly give each other?



The pies looked at themselves and at each other, saw that they now had the same number of parts of the same size, and that meant they too were the same, and they became very upset. "No you are not the same, – the baker comforted them. – You still have your initial individual divisions, which make you different individuals. But this does not make one of you more important than the other."

Here I finished my story of the pies and my explanation of the main principal of finding a common denominator –denominators of different fractions need to share with each other their constituent parts which the others do not have. And I demonstrated to my son how to do so with different fractions and numbers. And then I decided to show him how this principal – the desire and willingness to both share with another and accept from another – can also be applied to people, to our life. For this, by way of example, I used a number of situations that were familiar, or understandable to my son.

One in particular he was very familiar with. At the time, he and his friends were engrossed in reading some adventure series consisting of twenty or thirty books. Clearly, no one of them could obtain all of them, they could only afford a few books each out of their pocket money. Then they found a solution – they each got different books, then swapped them with one another, which enabled them to read the whole series. But one of their friends refused to take part in the exchange. So I said to my son: "You see, you all shared what one had and the others didn't. Thus you established your own "common denominator" and were able to read the whole series. But Guy refused to take part in your "common denominator" and now, if he wishes to read the whole series, he will have to buy it, and that will cost him a lot of time and money. And all because he refused to acknowledge the principle of a common denominator. If he continues to do so, he will find life very difficult."

Another example was from the circumstances of our immigrant life, when we were short of many things, which we could only obtain gradually. I asked my son to imagine that we owned only two plates, one for his mother and myself and one for him and his sister (he could picture this in his imagination: although we had enough plates to go round, whereas all four of us had to sleep on a single mattress on the floor). What would they do? If they argue over this plate, each demanding it for themselves, trying to snatch it from each other, not only would they not be able to eat off it, but might even break it. But they could do something different. Under the principle of a common denominator, they could offer the plate to each other – this would allow them to quickly agree how to eat off it in turn, and in time their mother and I would buy more plates, until each had their own.

And finally, one more example, an "international" one. In our home, while still in Moscow, we regularly spoke of Israel, and our small son picked up on the difference between what we discussed with our friends and what was said officially and by other people on that subject. In fact, this was a serious problem in "dissident" families – how to bring up our children, how not to instil in them from a young age the lies that pervaded life around us, without introducing, at the same time, discord and confusion in to their souls and lives, which they would not have been able to cope with. Each situation required its own solution. And once when my son asked me, why the Soviet Union gave its support to the Arabs and not to Israel, I gave him an answer, which from my point of view was both truthful and one that he could understand with his childish mind and experience: there are people, who always take the side of those who are more numerous, and there are many more Arabs than Israelis.

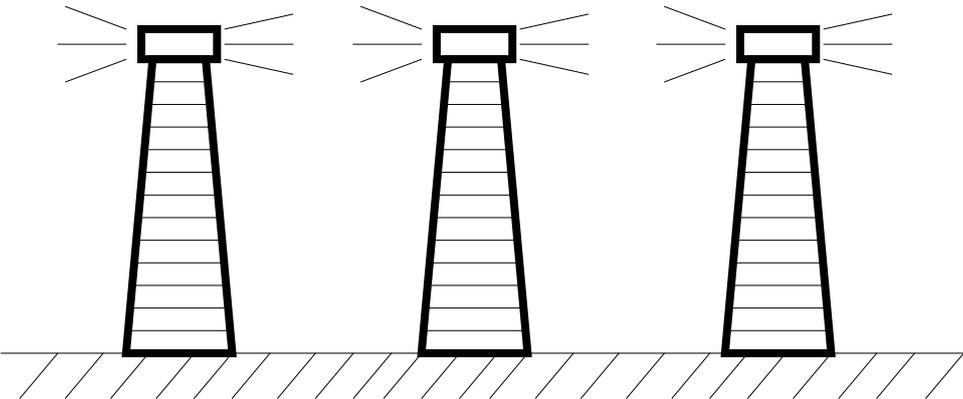
The topic of Israel continued, naturally, also in England, especially after our stay of several months in Israel. But now I could speak with an older son, in a more adult language. And I chose the Arab-Israeli conflict as another demonstration of the principle of the common denominator. I told to him, that this conflict, enmity and bloody warfare were over land, over territory, that each considered their own. But if they could say to each other: "This land is yours", they would be able to agree how to live on this land in peace.

As a result of all these spontaneous explanations to my son, I unexpectedly discovered something new and important for myself, that was – the beneficial effect of the principle of a common denominator, which goes far outside the parameters of arithmetic, and that can be applied in various spheres of life. But if that is really so, I said to myself, then it should also be applied to those situations where no common language could be found, in which I was involved at that time, and which seemed to me insolvable. Firstly, there were the two incidents that I had described earlier. The problem lay, as was demonstrated by the example of our group, not just in finding a common language and a "common denominator", which we had (anthroposophy), but in the ability to use it, in other words, in the ability *to share* our individuality, without losing neither it nor the common language.

But this ability is already the next step, which needed to be working on in our group. In most of the instances however, like at the school meeting, the "common denominator" was simply not there, so it was vital to find it first, before thinking of the next step. Once again I found my picture of the towers, and again studied it very carefully – did it contain a "common denominator", that had eluded the participants of the school meeting? I was convinced that, objectively it should be there, as in all human situations. Each situation has this "common denominator", which unites people and serves as the source of a common language. If this does not happen, it means that either people do not suspect it exists, or ignore it, or they do not seek or cannot find it. It also seemed to me, that if my picture accurately reflected that which was going on at the school meeting, it should also somehow show that which failed to take place there, but in reality existed.

I was looking at the towers-people, at their contents and tried to understand, where, in which layer was the "common denominator" concealed. I knew that it could not be in the "common" layers, even if they were common to all. These layers, like all the rest, are the individual, personal experience of everyone, and the fact that people may have some similar thoughts, feelings and fragments of life experiences, may promote mutual understanding in some spheres, but, that does not mean that they will have a common language when discussing something different. A common language can only be born from a "common denominator", which is not something universal, for all eventualities of life, but is something specific and concrete, appropriate to each situation. But where is it in my picture? Or maybe it is not there yet, and I need to "draw it in"? However, such intentional, "from the head" additions, are very dangerous as instead of clarifying the picture you have in your imagination, which should be reflected by what you have drawn, they might do the opposite – distort it.

And then, suddenly, I spotted what I was looking for. I did not need to add it to the picture, because it was already there, from the very beginning, only I had not seen it, the same as it was among the attendees of the meeting, and they had not seen it either. Because both they and I were looking in another direction, I did so literally, while they metaphorically. In the picture the "common denominator" was graphically depicted as the common foundation on which all the towers-people stood. Because, it alone serves as a foundation and support to all of them and which is



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However, I needed to return from the picture to reality – from towers to people. Nobody will argue that the earth is the common base on which all the towers stand. But what served as a single unifying support for the people who gathered at the general school meeting? It couldn't be the burning topic of the meeting – that only divided the people, both before and after the meeting. It couldn't be anthroposophy, because most of those present were not anthroposophists and knew nothing about it. Nor could it be the Waldorf education, because even among those who had deliberately chosen this type of education for their children, many were not knowledgeable about it. So what was it then?

It was not straightaway, and nor from my picture, that I found my answer (I say "my", because the answer to such questions does not come from an objective scientific approach or logic, but from a subjective understanding and intuition, and the right or wrong of the answer is tested by applying it to a concrete life situation). It

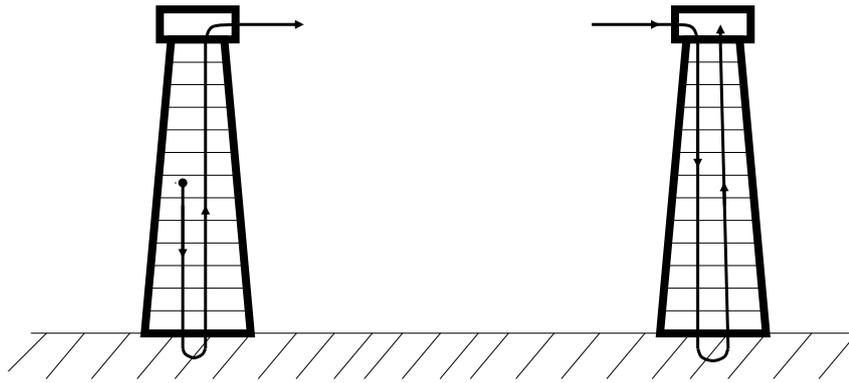
suddenly became obviously clear to me that the "common denominator" for all of those present at the school meeting, like everything else that went on in the school – were the children. Those very children, thanks to whom and because of whom, all these people had gathered in the school hall, whose main concern were the children, whose welfare and future, at the end of the day, were the main issue on the agenda, whatever other questions and problems were discussed. It was for these children that the school existed, in whose walls the discussion was taking place, and it was for them that the Waldorf education was created.

Then I took a fresh look at my picture and saw in it a generalized image of a typical, or archetypical situation of human community life: people have their individual life experiences, which sometimes help, at other times hinder finding a common language, and the invisibly present "common denominator", from which this common language can be obtained. Here I see our group, with its tangibly present "common denominator" – anthroposophy with its wonderful fruit – a common language. But I also see, that at some point, in one of the towers started speaking a layer of the newspaper *The Guardian*, while in another – the newspaper *The Daily Telegraph*, and our common language immediately evaporated, although the "common denominator" remained. What's to be done, how should one behave in such absolutely inevitable and inevitably dividing situations?

I put the picture aside, it could no longer help me. I had to look for the answer not on a piece of paper, but somewhere inside myself, on the basis of my practical experiences and specific observations and feelings in real life situations. This wonderful principle – of sharing with another – how to make it a reality? How do I offer another something purely personal, which he may not understand or even find alien? These were the questions addressed to myself, because it was, first of all, for myself that I wanted to find a concrete solution, that I could apply and try out. And I said the following to myself:

If you offer someone your purely individual "layer" – your thought, feeling, life experience – in the form that you acquired it and how it lives in you, the other person would not be able to comprehend it. Yet you have something in common with that person – not only some thoughts and experiences, but something bigger, that goes beyond them – your "common denominator". First of all, you have to find it, but that is not so easy, because it is different for each life context. But if you manage to find it, you need to "immerse" your individual "layer" into it, let it absorb the communality and make it *comprehensible* for another. If you have succeed here too, then you have fulfilled your part in sharing with another. Then it is down to him. He too must first find himself, or accept the "common denominator" that you have found, and having accepted your transformed "layer", he too should "immerse" it in what is mutual, let it absorb it and in that way make *comprehensible* to himself. Only after that, he can – he must! – subject it to critical analysis. At the same time, he is not at all required to *accept* it, i.e. to take on your point of view or agree with you. He only needs to *understand* you – in a way that you yourself wish to be understood. And you should do the same for him, for others, for everyone.

We all need to learn to understand each other in this way, which means – *to hear the other person*. To agree with him – that's another matter. We can not – that is both impossible and unnecessary – always and in everything to agree with each other. We need to learn to live with each other even with our inevitable disagreements. In this we can be helped by common sense and our other qualities or thoughts, but this not what I am talking about now. The point is that we must learn to *hear and understand each other* – in each and every situation. And the way to achieve it, that I discovered, I depicted in my picture:



For me this path is not theoretical, graphical or mechanical, but practical, real and living. I can speak of it and offer it to others, not as some "panacea", that I do not possess, but as an idea, imagination, to be called upon to help find a "common language", in every specific situation. It is something that I try and do myself, when I deal with others – either verbally or in writing. It was in this way that this book was written. I would dearly love it, if the reader could read it in the same way – having first filtered it through our "common denominator".