

THE PHILOSOPHY OF TAKING COUNSEL WITH OTHERS

By V. Tomberg

The *Philosophy of Freedom* by Rudolf Steiner bases the independence of the human being upon himself -- both in cognition as well as in moral action. In this book, the reality of the ego, working on the impulse for freedom, finds its expression in thought. It is a philosophy which is based neither on God, nor on nature, but on the Human ego. It answers the question : How can *I* attain real knowledge? How can *I* act freely?

However, the human ego is not alone -- it is only alone in the physical body. When it raises itself above the bounds of the physical body, it steps immediately into living *community* with other egos. There the question arises : How can *we* attain a true knowledge in common? How can *we* work together in freedom?

This question is answered through Rudolf Steiner's Mystery Dramas. There an answer to the question about the significance and the way of the *community* both in knowing and activity is dramatized. Gradually rising above mere experience in the physical body, the characters depicted flow one into another as soul-spiritual beings. *Within* each other, they *know*; *with* and *through* each other, they *act*.

We can see, therefore, an inner continuation of the *Philosophy* in the Mystery Dramas, for they provide an answer to the *next* question which arises. If the *Philosophy* answers the question of *individual* knowledge and *individual* action, then the Mystery Dramas can be an answer to questions of *community* in knowledge and action; that is, how *more* can be brought about in knowledge and action through the union of individuals than by the same individuals, each standing alone.

This difference becomes visible, too, in the *form* of the two works. While the *Philosophy* is intended for the single reader who wants to come to terms with himself, the Mystery Dramas are intended for dramatic performance before an audience. The form here corresponds to the content : wisdom in community could only be expressed by means of community ; that is, dramatically.

Through the *Philosophy*, the thinking consciousness frees itself from the physical organism and experiences itself in the life of pure thinking, the moral consciousness frees itself from tyrannical urges and from compulsive laws and experiences itself in the pure act of moral imagination.

Through the Mystery Dramas, the consciousness, free of the body, penetrates the soul-life of other people ; the soul, as it frees itself, intimately unites with other souls to carry out deeds in common.

The work in powerful thoughts and sharply defined concepts which can be stimulated by the *Philosophy* may free the soul from the physical body and lead it to experience in the etheric body. Working in dramatic pictures and word rhythms, the substance of the Mystery Dramas educates the soul to the *capacity for transforming* the body-free consciousness.

A soul which has achieved the above mentioned capacity for transformation can, to a certain degree, no

longer be alone. It lives in other people and bears others within its being. In a certain sense, it loses the right to private possession of knowledge. It becomes hard for it to distinguish between knowledge gained more by its own efforts and suffering, and knowledge gained through inner relations with others.

The sentence, "*I know this -- it is my knowledge,*" increasingly loses its meaning. Gradually one can only speak of knowledge in the soul which has arisen through the *whole stream of life*.

Such a person inwardly "takes counsel with others" who are connected to him. Every insight which comes to him is the result of a "council" -- a consulting "together". For before the knowledge ripens, a person must enter into various standpoints and cognitive levels. Not until he has identified selflessly with a series of different views and dispositions of mind does there arise out of these a *harmony*. This harmony *is itself* the newly gained insight.

The various standpoints and attitudes whose concordance provides a new insight cannot be merely thought out. They are real, represented by real people. It is through a living *experience* of the viewpoints in the souls of others that one comes to living insight.

Through an inner participation in the destinies and struggles of others, I can achieve wisdom which I cannot reach through *my own* striving, through struggling alone. Other people can make me wiser -- if I meet them with love.

Only when we humbly strive for the *harmony* of various viewpoints -- instead of stressing our *own* opinions and brandishing our own "principles" -- does esotericism begin. Only then does there begin a *life* free from the body. Our "own" opinions, moreover, are concocted in the lower parts of our organism.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another," said the loftiest Creator of a community. This attitude is necessary not merely to guarantee "a peaceful atmosphere for study", rather it is itself *the* means for developing higher knowledge. A school in the highest sense is not only a *place* where spiritual knowledge is taught ; it is much more than that, it is a community which is enabled to form common insights by passing through trials together. Rudolf Steiner speaks in several places in his Mystery Dramas of the "*council* of the brothers". This "council" must not be understood as if all the members of this brotherhood already know everything and only meet for discussion of a problem out of mere consideration for each other, nor must it be understood that they confer so that perhaps one of them may accept the opinion of another as being more correct.

The council of "brothers in the temple", as described for instance in the *Portal of Initiation*, takes place neither out of politeness, nor from uncertainty of decision ; rather it is *in itself a cognitive act* through the harmonization of individual standpoints represented by the different personalities. If only *one* point of view (in various shades) were represented there, such a council would not be a spiritual community. A council with standpoints "east, north-east, south-east" would not be complete -- it would be *weak* -- for not until the *polarities* of 'north' and 'south', of 'east' and 'west' are unified does it carry the possibility of higher knowledge and of stronger effect. It is important to bear in mind that the polarities working together in such a community can actually have the appearance of conflicting moral principles.

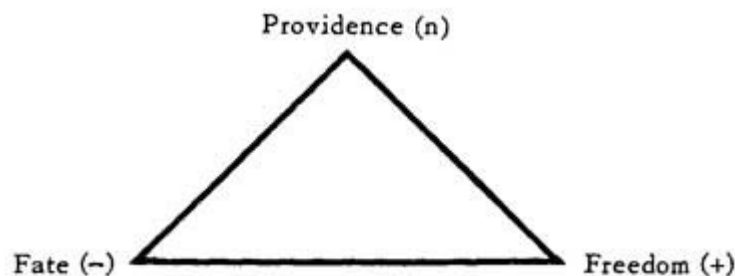
What, then, is a "council" intended for spiritual knowledge and spiritual work? It is a new living being, an organism, whose life consists in the working together of polarities. Just as in the human body life

consists on the one hand in a *struggle* between nervous system and digestive system, and on the other hand in the *working together* of these two polarities for the good of the whole organism in the rhythmic system, so the life of a spiritual council exists through the fact that opposite opinions are ever and again united on a higher level *after they have fully revealed themselves as opposites*.

Already this requirement is portrayed in scene one of the first Mystery Drama. Here we are presented with a sequence of different -- even conflicting -- views which are, however, in themselves correct. The standpoints from which the views arose are entirely justified.

It is also characteristic that thinking gradually becomes ever more capable of unifying contradictions as it emerges from the physical body -- when it lives in the life body. It acquires ever more strongly the capacity for *conciliation*.

The schools of Western occult tradition in the culture-epoch preceding ours fostered the wisdom of the intellectual soul through teaching thinking in such a way that the student had to solve a sequence of problems which could, and can still be described as "the neutralization of binaries". The pupil was given a concept to which he had to find its antithesis. Then he had to discover a *third* concept with which he could bind together the two contradictory concepts into a higher unity. It was an exercise in "ternary" thinking. Fabre d'Olivet's ternary about destiny can be cited as an example. The concept 'freedom' was given for a start : the freedom of human personality. The antithesis to freedom is fate ; fate which for human consciousness is, in the first instance, incomprehensible. The polarity between a fate which operates out of the past and a will which is directed solely toward the future finds its reconciliation in eternal providence (Divine direction). Thus:

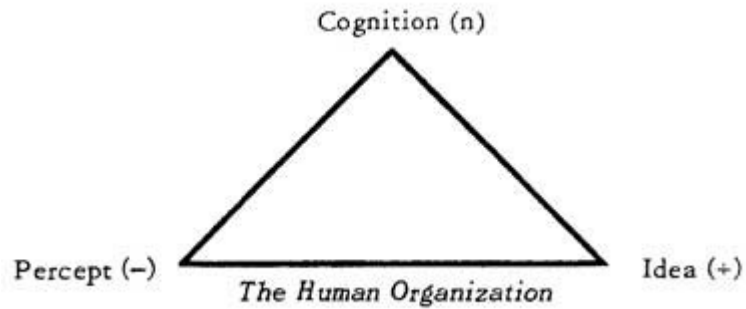


the whole figure equaling the idea of *Destiny*.

This approach is not suitable to our times and can no longer be considered seriously. We feel it resembles a game, for we are living in the age of the consciousness soul. But to attain the *faculty* of reconciling antitheses by means of thinking is still required today -- only it has to be done in another way.

One way of achieving this, one which is suited to modern consciousness, is the *Philosophy*. As a whole it is so constructed that a "not only -- but also" type of thinking must be exercised. The challenge is already there, even in the fundamental principle of epistemology in the *Philosophy* ; namely, that it is the organization of the human being which divides the one total reality into the realm of ideas and the world of perception. And the task of cognition is to overcome the separating element in the human organization in order to establish the unity of idea and percept as *truth*. This fundamental thought presents a challenge to human cognition to bridge over a basic cleft in human consciousness.

It is a challenge to create a "ternary" , not through intellectual speculation, but rather through mature thought activity of the consciousness soul.



Actually the content of the first part, the epistemological part of the *Philosophy*, is expressed by this diagram if it is imagined as being *in movement*. Then the bottom side of the triangle (the separating element of the organization) is gradually overcome as it rises upward until, arriving at the top of the triangle -- where percept and idea are united in the act of cognition -- it entirely disappears.

Thus the *Philosophy of Freedom* is a path toward overcoming the organization, a path of freeing the consciousness from the body.

The Mystery Dramas of Rudolf Steiner, however, contain the *life* of the body-freed consciousness. Here the human being becomes a member of a community through which he can widen his knowledge by way of the harmonious accord of the individual insights of a number of free personalities.

The Philosophy of Freedom Also titled: *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity and Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path*. --Ed.