



DuVersity 49

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FIGURING

Maria Popova

Some truths, like beauty, are best illuminated by the sidewise gleam of figuring, of meaning-making. In the course of our figuring, orbits intersect, often unbeknownst to the bodies they carry — intersections mappable only from the distance of decades or centuries. Facts crosshatch with other facts to shade in the nuances of a larger truth — not relativism, no, but the mightiest realism we have. We slice through the simultaneity by being everything at once: our first names and our last names, our loneliness and our society, our bold ambition and our blind hope, our unrequited and part-requited loves. Lives are lived in parallel and perpendicular, fathomed nonlinearly, figured not in the straight graphs of "biography" but in many-sided, many-splendored diagrams. Lives interweave with other lives, and out of the tapestry arise hints at answers to questions that raze to the bone of life: What are the building blocks of character, of contentment, of lasting achievement? How does a person come into self-possession and sovereignty of mind against the tide of convention and unreasoning collectivism? Does genius suffice for happiness, does distinction, does love?

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BREAKFAST WITH ROBERT FRIPP

Michael White

With Anthony Blake and Susan McDonald



Late September 2019 Anthony Blake was in Nashville holding a seminar sponsored by DuVersity at the Scarritt-Bennett Center near Vanderbilt University. As we were planning the event we learned that Robert Fripp and his band King Crimson would be performing the following Friday at the Ryman

Auditorium in downtown Nashville. Anthony checked his schedule and decided to stay a few days after the seminar and attend the concert. Robert invited him to breakfast the day after the concert and said he could bring some ‘chums’. Susan and I were delighted to meet him.

Anthony Blake and Robert Fripp have been friends since 1974 when Fripp decided to put the rock group King Crimson aside – “for ever and ever”! - and study at John Bennett’s International Academy for Continuous Education based in Sherborne, Gloucestershire. When Fripp arrived at Sherborne he was an international rock star and it was big news that he was stepping away from King Crimson to study there. Anthony was one of Bennett’s assistants and was helping handle the teaching responsibilities. Anthony went on to write a series of books that expanded on Bennett’s achievements and carried the principles of Gurdjieff’s Fourth Way into the 21st century. Anthony is not one to repeat the lessons of the past. He is pushing forward and bringing the insights as filtered through Bennett into the present.

The first King Crimson album, recorded in 1969, was a huge success and Robert has continued with King Crimson in a variety of iterations for the past fifty years. He has made over 700 studio recordings, played lead guitar for two of David Bowie’s most critically successful albums, and has recorded with Peter Gabriel, Brian Eno, David Byrne, Blondie, Daryl Hall and many others. He was included in the Greatest Guitarists of All Time list in the Rolling Stone magazine. He creates more experimental music which he called Frippertonics, and is now Soundscapes, and is known for creating a new standard tuning and using unusual time signatures. One of his many outstanding achievements has been ‘Guitar Craft’, using the special tuning he discovered – which put everyone on the same footing – incorporating Fourth Way ideas in the practice of performance. Some four thousand people from many countries have become ‘Crafties’ as they are sometimes called.

The Ryman is the place all the performers who come to Nashville want to play. It is the original home of Country Music and was, for many years, the home of the Grand Old Opry from its inception until they built a bigger auditorium by the river. Originally a church it only holds about 2,300 people and the seats are still the pews from the old church.

The King Crimson show ranked as one of the best I have seen at the Ryman. There was a seven person ensemble with three big drum sets across the front of the stage and then a riser with room for Fripp with his guitar, a small keyboard and a large bank of equipment that he was watching over. Next to him was the vocalist who also plays guitar, then the bass player and a horn player who concentrated on sax and flute.

The three of us met up in the grand hotel where Robert was staying. As we walked in he was already seated at a table in the nearly deserted dining room. When he saw Anthony he jumped up and they ran to each other and gave each other a huge embrace. They were like two kids at the playground. Fripp quickly introduced himself as “Robert” extending his hand to us both and we were seated around a table with menus laid out in front of us. He was dressed immaculately in a dark brown three-piece suit and a checkered tie, with a tight-fitting vest totally buttoned up, his hair was cropped short. He was a bit shorter than I expected. He had been seated on stage the night before the whole show. Now he looked like a banker, heavy glasses with dark frames, unlike what you would think of for an English rock star. He looked freshly scrubbed as well. Anthony called him a proper English gentleman and on the way into town had urged us to be on time as Robert was very punctual.

We studied the menu, typical Tennessee fare, and made our orders. Fripp remarked that it was one of the few times in his life he had been somewhere where there was nothing on the menu he could order. He had a cup of coffee and a small pitcher of cream and had his napkin carefully folded laying atop the cream pitcher. He asked the waiter if he could have smoked salmon and capers with a sliced raw tomato with mustard and was assured he could and laid his menu down with a sigh of satisfaction. He said it was much better eating at the venues where they played, that all the food was catered and they could control the menus, that when he has to eat out in a restaurant it is hard to find food that is suitable.

Once we dispensed with the waiter Fripp wanted to query us about the concert last night. He was especially delighted that Susan had never seen a King Crimson show. He was curious to hear the reactions of someone who had no familiarity at all with his music. He quickly turned to Susan and asked her response. She said it was a wonderful experience, that she had no idea what to expect, and was totally enthralled by the music, that the drumming and the whole experience was astonishing and held her attention from beginning to end. She said it was captivating, transporting, even exhilarating.”

“Well, thank you it is good to hear from someone who had no expectations.”

Then Susan asked him if this was his first time playing the Ryman.

“Yes, this was our first time, we recorded the performance for the archives. We record and video all our performances, but different venues have different restrictions. The prominent venues, such as the Royal Albert Hall in London, charge a very high price for the use of any recording or filming. We played three nights at Royal Albert Hall (June 18-19-20 2019). Conventionally that would be viewed as the height of the professional life. But sitting at breakfast two days later, I realized I was completely untouched by this. The best analogy I can make is that of a priest who has just served Holy Communion or the Mass. The congregation has had a good service, but the priest knows this has nothing to do with them personally: they are not Christ”.

Then Susan asked, “How aware are you of the audience reaction? It seems like you were so absorbed in the music that you can hardly pay attention to the audience reaction?”

“Well I always ask that the first three rows be dimly lit so I can see their responses but, as you said, it requires a lot of concentration on each song and you can’t be distracted by the audience. At the end of each show we invite the audience to take pictures, if they wish, and bring up the lights, so then we get to see the audience. But that’s about it. The rest of the time the technical requirements of the music are so complex it requires nearly all my attention. Mostly I have to count the bar measures. For example in the piece “Discipline”: when we hit the fast C minor section, I have one bar of 15/8, then fourteen bars of 14, then five of 15. The following change to C# minor I have 12 bars of 11/8, one bar of 12, 12 bars of 11, four bars of 12/8. The next and final two changes are both different. Jakko, our second guitarist, is playing in different meters. This is a measure of our attention. I don’t know another band of comparable quality that makes as many mistakes as we do. I love seeing good players make mistakes: you can tell the quality of the player by how they recover. At most performances we have a special ‘Royal Package’ and I meet the people before the show to welcome them. I often ask how many of them practice listening for two to ten hours or twelve hours a day.”

He said he was surprised that several people raise their hands. I’m a little shocked at that, I don’t know many people who can integrate their practice into their life for that amount of each day.

He looked at Anthony, “Did you enjoy the show?”

“Oh yes, quite good you know. The discipline is obvious, in some ways the music is impersonal, as far as I could see there is no sloppiness in anything, it seems you are going against the grain of the pop world, and are bringing the precision of the classical world into the pop world, you can’t really call your band a pop or rock band, it is more like a classical ensemble with modern instruments. From where I was sitting it appeared you had very complex scores with written music.”

I looked at Fripp to see if he reacted but he seemed to appreciate the comment as a complement not as a criticism.

I asked Anthony, “Was this the first time you have seen King Crimson?”

“Oh no, I’ve seen them several times over the years in different forms.”

Then Fripp turned to me.

I said, “I have to admit that I have seen you twice before, once at Claymont Court with the League of Crafty Guitarists, and then in a Frippertronics concert at a theater in Nashville but I have never seen King Crimson.”

He was intrigued with that and looked at me to see if I had any comment about the show so I said, “Listening to the concert was like having Miles Davis join the Grateful Dead when they were at their most psychedelic, it got really crazy there a few times, it was like someone let the madness in, or like when you are peaking and you are just watching it all happen and wondering if it can get any weirder than this, and then it does. At times it was beyond me, I was looking down at the band from the balcony and would have to look at each of the players to figure out who was playing in what time signature, and at times it felt like the guitar player and the organ, and the horn and the bass and the drums were all playing in different times, and all three drummers doing a different beat, at the same time there was an overall time that everyone seemed to be operating in, where you would all meet up but between those beats everyone was playing by their own rules. It was a rich sound, full with the three drummers playing against one another, then taking a beat from one to the other to the other, it was enthralling. I really liked when you were playing guitar and you were just hitting these two notes, repeating them over and over and it created a trance like state which was sustained by the drummers and it was like the other members were playing in the spaces between the alternating notes and you continued alternating between those two notes beat after beat until at some magical point you took the two notes up an octave and it lifted the whole crowd and the process would begin again. There were points in the show, especially when there were no vocals when the music sounded like the Pipes of Pan, it reminded me of the stuff played by the master musicians of Joujouka. There were times where it was like wild trance music with the drummers doing those polyrhythms. I was into William Burroughs back in the 1980s and he turned me onto the music of Joujouka and I read about Brion Gysin and how he and Burroughs heard the musicians of Joujouka during the rituals in the village in the mountains outside Tangiers and Gysin traced the music back to fourth century BCE Greece when the Greeks colonized the north coast of African and this village learned the music of Pan, the god of panic, and were still doing it and I heard echoes of that kind of sound in some of the songs you played last night.”

I wondered if he knew that story, I assumed he did so didn’t want to go into it but he had no comment so I went on.

“Listening to the music last night was like an audio version of doing the Gurdjieff movements, even just listening to the music requires a single pointed attentiveness that has to be maintained in order to follow what is going on in the music and it is like a meditation, if you aren’t paying attention to the music and your attention drifts, the music grabs you and brings you back, it creates a single pointed awareness that rivets attention and when it drifts, then the music is there to bring it back.”

This got a smile out of him but he didn't confirm or deny.

"It must be gratifying to see the art you created fifty years ago is relevant and moving today."

He nodded but didn't comment.

I said I thought he was in the vanguard of a musical revolution that started in the 1960s and was continuing today. I mentioned a quote from Plato about how changes in music create changes in society and said that I was friends with Harry Smith who did the *Anthology of American Folk Music* in 1951 who watched it create a musical revolution in late 1950s and 1960s. Thirty years later received a Grammy for lifetime achievement and in his acceptance speech he emphasized how music can change society. I said that in *The Republic* Plato warned that musical innovation can be dangerous to the state, that when the modes of music change, society will change along with it. I quoted it as best I could, (I have since looked it up and it reads:)

be watchful of innovations in music...and to the best of your power guard against them...For a change to a new type of music is something to beware as a hazard of all our fortunes. For the modes of music are never disturbed without unsettling of the most fundamental political and social conventions... [*The Republic*, Book IV; W.W. Fowler trans.]

I told him that Harry's *Anthology* was an illustration of the truth of the Plato quote, that we could all see it now, that it can happen, society was changed by music and that now he is out there on that edge of a new music revolution innovating new forms of music keeping the revolution alive, and the repercussions were still in the making.

He didn't have anything to say about my critique until I mentioned how great the drumming was at which point, he was happy to talk about the band.

"Yes," he said, "Gavin Harrison is a master drummer, an extraordinary drummer. At a point in his life Gavin decided to seriously address his practice, and went to a studio to practice and the only time he could get in was when they were closed. They would lock him in for eight hours and he would practice. The whole band is amazing, you know we make more mistakes than any band of comparable quality I know. But sometimes even the mistakes are interesting."

"What do you mean about the mistakes?" I hadn't heard any mistakes and was curious.

"Well there are times when each member of the band has to keep their own time. With three drummers they are often playing against each other and not necessarily in the same time as the other instruments, so when everyone is counting their own time, if anyone misses a beat there are a lot of possibilities for making errors. It is the things you forget that are the most important."

That intrigued me, I took it that the things you forget and the mistakes you make are the wild cards, the chance innovations, that break in the continuity where something totally wild and new enters in.

“Interesting.” I said, “It does look like everyone appears to be really concentrated on what is going on, and the music was so complex I had to keep looking to see who was playing what. I could hear sounds and it was hard to identify who was creating that layer of the music and I would look at each person’s hands to get a clue who was playing which part. When you came out it seemed like the first two songs were more subdued and then on the third song, where your bass player brings out that electric stand-up bass and starts playing it with the bow, then things really took off, and I could see it in the audience, it was as if something went through the crowd and the excitement level grew measurably.”

“Well that was planned to happen.” He said, “It takes the first couple of songs for the audience to settle down, people are still out there milling around, people coming in and finding their seats, all that sort of stuff, so by the third song everyone is settled and it makes for a change in attention.”

“The bass player was great, and I really enjoyed when he played the Chapman Stick.”

“Tony is one of the greats, he was the bass player on John Lennon’s last album and we have worked together a lot over the years since meeting on the first Peter Gabriel solo album in 1976. Tony has worked with a lot of great people, Paul Simon, Judy Collins, Carly Simon, the list goes on and on. This band has been together since 2014 and has stayed steady since then.”

“It sure shows in the way you play together. It is really remarkable having the three drummers in front of the band.”

“Yes, we have turned the band upside down with the drummers in the front, the very structure of the band has developed including the physical arrangements and how they stand on the stage.”

At some point the food arrives, a flurry of waiters appear and plates full of food appear in front of us.

Then Susan asks, “Did you know you wanted to be a musician at an early age?”

“There were two points in my life that were critical, one at age eleven and the other at age twenty, and from then I knew I was going to be a musician.

Then Anthony says, “But you have told me you are tone deaf.”

“Yes, I began tone deaf with no sense of rhythm.”

Anthony looked over at him, “How can that be?”

“Well I assumed that if I worked with musicians who knew what they were doing that I could figure it out. But even at age eleven I was drawn to music and I felt determined that I could do it even if I was tone deaf. In my school at that time there was a boy who sat in the desk right in front of me named Alan, and he was physically dumpy. He had chronic flatulence and every two minutes I would hear this squeak. Now there was another boy named Osborne who had a natural talent for running, handsome, with great posture, and he was the best boy on the track. Alan decided he wanted to be a runner and when he went

out on the track he was no contest for Osborne. I watched year after year. Alan stuck with it. It took him four years and then he beat Osborne. I could see from that the point of practice. That was my lesson and I took it seriously. I could see that if you practice and train hard enough and stick with it long enough then you can match those who have a natural talent and don't practice.

When I was twenty I had to choose between fate and destiny, listening to A Day In The Life and Hendrix. Fate is what you're born with, you can't escape that, but destiny is a different matter. Destiny is a spiritual calling and you must chose. Fate will unfold no matter what and will be there regardless. Destiny has to have your cooperation. And I chose to go with my destiny. I had to make a choice between being a dutiful son and what I felt I could do on my own. The choice wasn't easy. My family was very humble you know." He looked at Anthony.

"Yes, my family was humble too." I knew the story of Anthony's childhood in a working class family but as he said this I could see something overcome Anthony and he was on the edge of his chair grinning and saying, "Yes, my family is more humble than your family." Like it had become a badge of honor and he was parodying it and Fripp loved it and they both had a laugh over it. Of course both Susan and I were thinking about our own childhood and, while neither of us had been poor, neither was anywhere near rich, not even close, it was lower middle class for both of us and then as I was picturing my childhood circumstances Anthony made his comeback with "My family is humbler than yours" I had to laugh and then marveled that in our lives we were all able to do something so different from the way we were raised and it ended up with the four of us eating together in the fanciest hotel in Nashville.

That changed the tone of the conversation, created a little break and to regain the momentum Fripp looked at Anthony and asked, "Well how was your event last weekend?" Anthony had just conducted a four-day seminar, starting on the Thursday before and running through Sunday and had coordinated the event to include theater, dance, movements, meditations, poetry, virtual reality presentations, incredible music and his own lectures and exercises. It is not easy to describe and Anthony was not comfortable trying to tell his own role or rule on the success of it and he said, "Oh, it went very well" and glanced at me to see if I wanted to say more about it. I was happy to jump in, it had been an incredible few days, intense and exciting.

"What has been happening at these last few seminars is something every special that is difficult to describe, basically it involves coming to an event that includes music, dance, theater and poetry along with a series of interconnected lectures with multiple presenters who are all circling around the same central star. But there is a dimension of hazard about the whole thing, it has to do with accepting uncertainty and putting yourself in a place where what you know is being questioned and extended and expanded beyond your usual boundaries, you have to get outside your own habitual base to grasp it and that can be challenging. It creates an openness to experience, a liberation from conventionality, an

acceptance without rejection. It also means a lot of people just aren't going to be interested or able to accept this premise. It takes a certain amount of courage to step into a situation where you are face to face with uncertainty and how do you put this in a flyer and advertise it. The agenda is a moving target that works itself out on the fly although it all falls into place sometime before we gather. It is so open and creates such spaciousness that almost anything can happen from science, psychology, philosophy, theater, dialogue, dream work, dance, movements, videos, music, and a wide variety of exercises along with conventional lectures. These events have an international flavor. At this past weekend there was an amazing classical pianist from Spain, there was a professional actor who was trained on the London stage who is living in Costa Rica, plus we had a man from Sweden who is the Swedish Memory Grand Champion along with an oboist from Seattle, an opera singer from Mexico and people from Canada and from all over the United States. The days are totally filled, we are in a beautiful venue, it is an old Methodist college built in the 1800s and it is all stone with slate roofs and high arched ceilings, stained glass windows and arched stone walkways between the buildings and the main dining room looks like something out of Hogwarts in the Harry Potter movies. This time the pianist played a number of pieces and gave lectures about the history and meaning of music and played a wild variety of music some of it in the form of videos, things like Glenn Gould performing with Leonard Bernstein when they were both very young, then there was a John Cage piece, choral music from the late middle ages, and on and on. The memory expert is a very interesting person and he was talking about how preliterate cultures use memory codes and how we can enhance our memory capabilities and it was very counter intuitive and fascinating material. The theater person is working with Anthony on a theatrical presentation of *Beelzebub's Tales* and doing theater workshops and presentations, then there is a dancer who specializes in the Middle Eastern folk dances that are relevant to the Gurdjieff work plus her own dance compositions which have been really spectacular. The days start at seven A.M. with a form of 'inner work' derived from Gurdjieff and Bennett and then launches into a program of presentations that last until after nine that evening. It is so full and so rich that it is difficult to describe or convey all that goes on. This all happens along with talks by Anthony and this year's talks were based on the theme of the ark and carried an important message, prophetic in many ways. He opened one of his talks with a music video of you and Peter Gabriel performing a song and it included a sound bite of John Bennett predicting how sea levels were going to be rising and that there was the possibility of catastrophic conditions due to human interference in the environment. The presentations on the ark concentrated on two layers of symbolism where the ark was not only the vehicle that we use to survive the flood but also the ark, like the ark of the covenant, like a container to hold the esoteric teaching that could bring about the changes needed to create a new paradigm that circumvents the existing dilemma, the existing mindset, the existing societal and global values that have brought us to the eve of widespread species extinction. Then there was the ark as our body as the awareness holder, this was the secret meaning of the ark. The art was all illustrative of the symbolic meaning of the ark as the means for survival and the means for transformation to either avoid this catastrophic situation or to restart humanity when it comes. It was really digging into circumventing those aspects of our nature that have created the capitalistic consumerism and the militaristic, corporate system that is

destroying the planet. It is not easy to convey what goes on and it is different every time in terms of theme and presentations and the dynamics of transformation. However, Anthony is like the maestro, like the conductor of the orchestra, or maybe like the circus master in a three-ring circus, he is the still point in the middle of this chaos, the eye of the hurricane that whirls around.”

I looked back at Anthony and could see he was satisfied with my description such as it was. Then he jumped back in,

“Yes, you know we have been doing this for a long time now. You remember the early days in Baltimore. But I have diversified it a lot more now, using different media, not just all talking, doing dance and music and theater, and now even virtual reality.”

Anthony has been holding these types of workshops and seminars for over thirty years and Fripp had contributed to some of the early ones. He had also been active with Claymont Court where he held the early Guitar Craft courses. Then Anthony asked about the Guitar Craft and was it still going on.

“Yes. We held Guitar Craft and Guitar Circle courses for thirty-two and-a-half years until 2016. Then I had to get out of the way. We used the New Standard Tuning, a completely different tuning that leveled the playing field: it didn’t matter if you were a professional or just picking up the guitar. We are planning an Introduction To The Guitar Circle next October 2020. The main differences to the earlier courses are that we have an outside event organization and are opening the courses to anyone interested, even without an instrument. In the early years of GC the participants were mostly young men, at the beginning of their professional and in-the-world lives. Now, almost thirty-five years later, I anticipate a larger proportion of mature persons who have found their position in the world, some in positions of responsibility in their community. Also, people who have little or no interest in learning to play guitar; but perhaps who have found a resonance in the ideas of Guitar Craft and the Guitar Circle, and maybe touched by music in which I have been involved. The event organisers are planning for great locations, exotic and beautiful places, and charging two to four thousand dollars for four days. Many of our earlier courses were held in Catholic retreat houses. We held several courses since 2013 in a retreat house in Tepoztlan, Mexico, for example.”

“I’ve been to Tepoztlan.” I tell him. Visions of Tepoztlan flash in my mind, it is a remarkable place, a small Mexican village hundreds of years old built inside the caldera of an ancient extinct volcano, the walls of the volcano are up on three sides with sheer rock faces that loom above the village. The village streets are cobblestone and each house is a hacienda with a wall around it and everything is built of black lava stone and it is tropical with flowers on all the trees and bushes. I told him about working with the radical Dzogchen master Keith Dowman on his biography and visiting him there for ten days.

He mentioned Darlene Franz, who is on the board of DuVersity. Darlene is a professional oboe player who oversees the music at the seminars. He thought she would be particularly interested in what he was trying to do in his new courses. He said, “Our event organizer has been scouting out places in the northeastern United States, around New England, but was also considering the Queen Mary cruise ship or even places in China, Scotland, Tuscany or Japan.” He looked at Anthony, “I would like to attract people who have achieved

something in their lives. To do that it has to be in good locations. What I hope we can do is influence the decision makers, the people who have effects on other people. We are in a real fix with climate change, it is the existential crisis of our time. In the 1960s there was the Vietnam War and the struggle for civil rights, well now we are facing climate change. I want to get through to people, like this man who was associated with Bill Gates, a mathematician working on plans to see how people are likely to react to high population redistribution, how can this happen, and how to track displaced doctors and specialists in the migrations.”

Anthony was all for this, “Yes,” he said, “Gurdjieff said if a man could make shoes you can talk to him, it is the people who know how to do something that can help.”

I jumped in, “As far as the Bennett people and the Gurdjieff people are concerned they are stuck in old ways and aren’t addressing these kinds of things, they are in an endless loop of repeating something they read in a book or did decades ago. Playing a guitar does not look serious to them and they don’t like what someone like Anthony is trying to do.”

I felt like he and Anthony were both in that boat and their camaraderie was palpable. What Fripp is doing in this Guitar Craft and in his concert appearances is to create a kind of self-observation, a self-awareness, that brings the lessons of the Fourth Way into his work and uses it to create something for the audience which, while they certainly feel the effects, don’t necessarily have a clue about what is going on. For him playing the guitar is a kind of work exercise and he is creating music that brings that state of self-awareness to the audience with music designed to be a form of meditation like the movements such that if your attention waivered you lost it and only by keeping and holding attention can you stay with it.

My mention of the current state of the Fourth Way got a response from Fripp, “You have to be careful about all this, it can all be cosmic horseshit.”

I wasn’t sure what I had heard and asked, “What did you say?”

He looked across the table and said “Cosmic horseshit” with a bit of smile. “Yes, you’ve heard of Bhante, right ?”

I nodded. Bhante was a Theravada monk who was close to John Bennett and would come to teach at his institutes.

“Well there is a story about when Bhante was in the forest monastery doing a walking meditation he walked into a tree. Bhante laughed at himself.”

“That’s funny, I never heard that one.”

Then he looked at Anthony and said, “That’s what I admire about you. You don’t provide the answers, you ask the questions. And that’s the challenge, to ask better questions. We are both on the fringes, you on the fringes of Fourth Way teachers and me on the fringes of popular music.”

I asked Robert, “Did you get to meet Mr. Bennett?”

“Yes. I met Mr. Bennett at a public talk on the Fourth Way, and the private meeting the following day, a month before he died. I went up to Mr. Bennett at the end of the meeting and told him that I was hoping to attend the Fifth Course at Sherborne, the following year. Mr. Bennett asked: ‘What is your name?’. He was a little deaf at that point and asked me to repeat it, and then he said: ‘I will remember you’. Mr. Bennett died in December 1974 on the Fourth Course, and I attended the Fifth Course, 1975-76, where Anthony was giving the cosmology talks.”

Anthony remembered that he was leading some of the classes and he remembered Robert being there, he said he knew that having Robert there was a big deal at the time, but they didn’t have much contact. Robert was in some of the classes Anthony was teaching. Anthony said, “I knew he was a pop star but that was a world beyond my kin, we didn’t become friends till later. Robert was just another chap at Sherborne, but one who was famous and that’s all I knew in those days. Then after we became friends you came to a couple of the early DuVersity events. You even arranged to let me use your studio, I remember we went to Peter Gabriel’s studio. We were interested in the same kinds of experimental music and things just sort of took off from there.”

“Yes,” Fripp says, “we were together with William Pensinger at one of the first Baltimore events and then gradually became friends working kind of in parallel.”

“Right.” Anthony says, “Then we were in Seattle and Gordon Lawrence was there.”

I sensed their bond and their openness to new forms, Anthony with his seminars sponsored by DuVersity and Robert using Guitar Craft and King Crimson. Robert looked at Anthony and asked, “What are the ages of your audience at the seminars? Where are the young people in the Fourth Way?”

“The young people are those in their forties and fifties, but of course you have to pay to get into these things so I suppose that makes it hard for the younger people.”

Robert said, “I am focused on the young, what was the audience like last night?”

Neither Anthony nor Susan spoke up so I said, “Well around us it was mostly an older crowd, it was definitely counterculture as well, there were young people in the audience, no doubt about that, but it looked to me like the old people had them out numbered.”

“On this tour our primary aim is to present King Crimson to innocent ears: young people and people who haven’t seen King Crimson before. It doesn’t matter to me very much whether they like it or not, it matters to me that they make up their own minds, free of received opinion and shared journalisms. In South America, particularly Mexico, we are becoming popular with young people who listen to Spotify. The older fans have expectations. We have two more performances in the States and then we are going to South America, for the first time in Brazil and Chile, and the first time in Buenos Aires since 1994. We’ll be playing in front of 100,000 people at the Rock in Rio festival. “

Anthony remarks, “You seem keen on complexity in your music, what is it you listen to, who are the composers you are listening to now?”

“I do my morning sitting in the room and then have breakfast alone with my morning reading and listening. I bring my i-Pod and earbuds. Recent listening: early Stravinsky when he didn’t know what he was doing. I don’t care for his later music, he got to know too much. Unsuk Chin, Luciano Berio, Giacinto Scelsi, Kaija Saariaho and Pierre Boulez. I listen to this and read. I scroll through my play list and hit something. At one breakfast recently I was listening to György Kurtág while reading Mr. Bennett’s book *Deeper Man*.”

Anthony asked, “What do you think of techniques like Ted Machett’s neural education? The idea of problem solving by listening to music and letting the mind work out the solution on its own.”

“Definitely, bring up the question and then ask the music. Music has its own intelligence. You have done something like this right?”

“Yes, of course I modified it into what I called ILM, or Immediate Learning Method. I particularly liked the term *ilm* I came to use instead of ‘neural education’ since it is also a word in Arabic that means knowledge. The basic idea is to postulate a question or a problem and then clear the mind and put on a piece of music and sit quietly listening to the music without consciously dwelling on the problem and then at some point the mind itself will come up with the solution spontaneously.”

Then Robert says, “Yes, if you have a problem, ask the music. You may find the music knows better than you and provides an answer. But tell me more about what you are up to lately?”

Anthony responds, “It has been interesting these past few years, I have been inviting in other speakers and performers and integrating them and then I just act as the maestro and use other contributors and feel attracted to the interaction of people. As I was watching you last night I had that same feeling, you were so still on stage, there was no evident expression, it reminds me of Mr. B and he would give those amazing talks and do it with no affect in his voice but somehow he still connected with everyone in the audience, he would just sit there in his chair as if he was meditating and would start with a period of silence and have pauses here and there in the talks but somehow it was still compelling. Now it feels like you are the still point of the band but totally in charge. Like you represent the will of the group, so you only have to be, you don’t have to shout or direct, you are the most unmoving part of the whole band just subtle signals but not as an authority figure because they all know what they are doing and everyone is attuned. Bennett was always thinking that effective leaders don’t push, they carry the harmony of the whole thing they don’t have to push people but only to be in time. Like last night you stayed on your chair, you had your guitar, your keyboard and that amazing bank of equipment and from there you were watching over the process. You made no announcements, there were no introductions for the band, no talk between songs, not even the names of the pieces, the music just started and went on, that was in some ways very austere but also supports the complexity of the music so all the effort is going into the complexity of the music. By the way I want to thank you for the great work you have been doing supporting the Bennett

archive. It is wonderful how you have taken all those talks and transferred them to CD. Hopefully they will sell and, thanks to the use of your studio you have really cleaned them up and without all that equipment this wouldn't have happened. There was a major breakthrough in the archive."

"There are people in Barcelona working with the archive now."

"Well, we all owe you a debt of gratitude for masterminding the archive, you really saved the day since all that material would have languished and was not at all accessible. I would like to see a book compiled on Bennett's life and work. He was known as the White Dervish in Turkey so he really knew his stuff even back in the 1920s. I know there is such a project that Joseph Azize wants to do. I trust him, being a Coptic priest who is also in the work. He has written a book relating to Gurdjieff's inner exercises and how they relate to Christian contemplation especially in regards to the Greek orthodox (*Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Exercises, Contemplation*, OUP). We have been friends for twenty years or more."

By this time, we had finished our meal and a covey of waiters appeared and cleared the table. The bill came and the waiter laid it beside me. I pulled it down in my lap and reached for my wallet but Robert had seen it and gave me a stern look and said, "Please, let me handle it."

"No, please, I'm happy to buy you breakfast." I wasn't giving up the bill without further ado, I had it in my lap and thought it was a nice gesture to buy his meal but he looked at me even sterner and insisted so I passed it across the table. While we were waiting for the waiter to come back I pulled out a bag of books and records.

"You know Anthony publishes his own books and I publish as well and we work together on some of the projects, Anthony helps with my books and sometimes I help with his projects and I brought some of the books." I show him a copy of my latest book *Luminous Minds*, "This is a book of interviews and it has an interview with Anthony in it and I thought you might be interested. I have a stack of books here to show you, please just take any you feel like, but don't feel compelled to take them, I know you are traveling, or if you want I will send them so you aren't burdened with carrying them." I had a copy of Anthony major work of the past few years, *A Gymnasium of Beliefs in Higher Intelligence*, "I imagine you have it already but I brought one just in case."

"Yes, as a matter of fact I have read it." I started to return it to the bag but he spoke up quickly, "But I would really like to have another copy, I like having books in different places you know." So I returned it to the table, I also had a bi-lingual edition of one of my poetry books *Confidential Advice for the Unconventional* and he was interested in it and indicated he would like to have all the books. I signed the copy of the *Luminous Minds* and the poetry book. Anthony had already signed *Gymnasium* and I passed them across the table. He seemed very pleased to have them and said he would carry them in his wardrobe case. Then I bought out four records, one of the Guitar Craft albums, *Robert Fripp and the League of Crafty Guitarists Live!* from his Guitar Craft workshop IX at Claymont Court in 1985 and

three old King Crimson albums and laid them on the table with a sharpie, “I also brought these if you don’t mind signing?” He took them and started signing.

“I suppose I should inquire about your policy of signing albums?”

“I never sign.”

This befuddled me and I didn’t know what to think.

Anthony spoke up, “Well, these will fetch a good price on e-bay.”

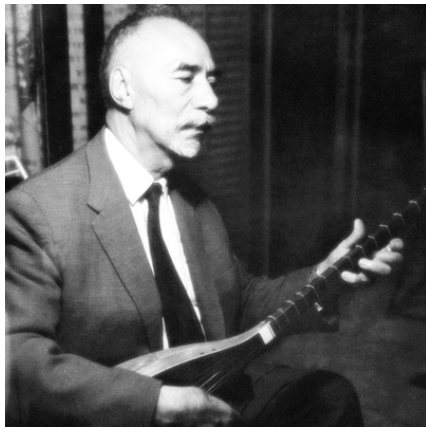
I responded, “Well I appreciate it, these things come to me but they never go out.” Susan nodded in agreement at my propensity for collecting books and music. He passed them back and stood up. “Well I’m afraid I must get packed, we are leaving for Atlanta soon, it is a five-hour drive on the bus.” He came around the table and gave Susan and me a big hug and we both backed away to give he and Anthony a chance to say their good-byes and we were off.

THE OSTAD ELAHI BIRTHDAY LECTURE

Imperial College London, 11th September 2010,

Delivered by Simon Weightman

Formerly Head of the Department of the Study of Religions, The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London



This is a commemoration of Ostad Nur Ali Elahi on his birthday. In the final months at the end of his worldly life, having completed all his responsibilities and fulfilled all his obligations, he described himself as standing ready with his suitcase on a railway platform waiting for the train. That train duly arrived on the 19th October 1974 and carried him away. With many people one feels, “That’s that”. Not so with Ostad Elahi. He was always so much more than the obedient and never indulged body that he had shed. Many people today feel and detect his presence in various aspects of their lives, even those who had never met him, and I who did have the good fortune to come to know him for over a year in the early 1960s,

often feel him today keeping me up to the mark and urging me on. This then is not a memorial address; it is rather an introduction to a remarkable and beneficent presence.

I was introduced to Ostad Elahi in 1962 because, having completed my degree in Persian, with Turkish and Arabic, I was in Teheran on a research fellowship to gather material on a religious order called the Ahl-e Ḥaqq and he was, I was told, both an adherent and an authority on the order. He had, in fact, just completed the manuscript of a work on the subject called Kitāb Burhān al-ḥaqq and he let me have a typescript copy from which I was able eventually to publish an academic article in 1964 in fulfilment of the terms of my fellowship. Ostad’s book was the first exposition to be published from within the Ahl-e Ḥaqq and it has grown in size over many editions through the

addition of many questions and answers. It has sold an astonishing thirty thousand copies over the years. In it Ostad situates the Ahl-e Ḥaqq as a spiritual order, the Path of Perfection, within the orthodox twelver Shiism of Iran and thereby he has been able to give a much needed protective legitimacy to its hundreds of thousands of members. The order of the Ahl-e Haqq is a structured socio-religious organization, largely hereditary, with its own rituals and revered texts and a vibrant mystical tradition with its own saints, shrines and pedigrees of sanctity. Its members are spread in Luristan, in both Persian and Iraqi Kurdistan, in the Turkish speaking regions of Persian Azerbaijan in the North-West, and along to Teheran and Veramin and villages in the Elborz mountains. Ostad Elahi was born into this milieu and although, as I understood later, he had long since transcended his origins, he wrote Kitāb Burhān al-ḥaqq both to fulfil the obligation of gratitude to these origins and as a farseeing protection for the order against possible persecution. In my amiable and courteous dealings with Ostad over this book, I knew almost nothing about the man himself: I did not know he was a retired judge, nor did I know that he was an Ostad, a Master, twice over. He was a master, an Ostad, in musical performance such that Sir Yehudi Menuhin for example expressed astonishment at hearing him play the tambour, and he was a master, an Ostad, in the spirit, which is where we must start.

There is a pattern of assumptions throughout the Islamic world about how a human being is constituted. The primary differentiation is between the self-hood, nafs, and the spirit, rūḥ. It is obvious enough that we are a body, mind and emotions with a degree of self-awareness; moreover, since each passing thought, word, feeling etc claim to be “I”, it means we are a self-hood, since that is how a selfhood is defined. Some differentiate our selfhood into a material, a vegetable, an animal and a human self, reflecting the various biological stages of our evolution and the different forces in our nature. We can see the material self in our corporality and automatic functioning, the vegetable self in the tropism of our reactions, especially like and dislike, the animal self in the various drives and forces that form our character, and the human self in our speech and rationality. Our self-awareness is provided by the sensitivity of our vegetable selves, but it does not extend to the animal or human selves which are situated in what is called the unconscious. This then is what we are, a selfhood comprising four different levels of selves, two of which we cannot see into. This is our vehicle, our instrumentality which enables us to live in this world, this is our nafs. What is not obvious is the second component of a human being, the spirit, rūḥ.

In the Holy Qur’ān it is explained that the spirit in people is from the command of God, and by that command it is also hidden from them. One property of the spirit is the power of discrimination, of discernment, of seeing instantly right from wrong, the true from the false and so on. This property is called ‘aql, the intellect, as it was also in medieval Christian scholasticism. The spirit also carries the possibility for a person to acquire the Divine Attributes, justice, beauty, goodness, mercy and so on. From the spirit too comes the sense of what our obligations are. The spirit we are also told by the mystics and enlightened is full of yearning to return to the Source from which it came.

The co-existence within a human being of both a selfhood and a spirit creates the essential human dilemma, whether to indulge the selfhood and ignore the promptings of the spirit, or whether to cultivate and follow the spirit and severely restrict and control the inclinations of the selfhood. Of course, much of the selfhood works automatically and to our obvious advantage, but there are large areas which run wild if nobody is in control. Anger, pride, sloth and laziness, greed, desire, the passions and the domination of others are obvious cases, and the most insidious of all is our deep-

seated egoism which puts me and my benefit first and can taint even the most virtuous activities and aspirations. This is why all spiritual paths, in which ever religion they are situated, make the struggle with the selfhood a necessary and continuing priority.

Of the four selves that form our selfhood, the spirit is located in the deepest self to which our self-awareness has no access, the human self. The human self has then two natures. The lower nature, natural man, *bashar* in Qur'anic Arabic, stands at the pinnacle of the selfhood and is, unless transformed, presided over by the ego. The higher nature, spiritual man, *insān* in Qur'anic Arabic, comprises the spirit, the *rūḥ*. Together they form the basis of what in Christianity is called the soul or in Islamic spirituality is referred to as the heart, *dil* in Persian, or *qalb* in Arabic, which is the spiritual centre of man. In practical terms, we can see how both can work together in solving for instance a mathematical problem. The intellect, *aql*, which is a manifestation of the spirit, can give an answer in an instance, but discursive reason, one of the defining characteristics of the human self, is needed to work out why or if it is right. If the intellect was not clouded by the murkiness of egoism and other lower forces from the lower selves, it could have access to higher realms of wisdom and knowledge in the form of illumination and enlightenment. It is also here that human creativity is located. This then is the more or less accepted understanding of the human situation across most of Islamic spirituality. Now we return to Ostad.

Ostad's father, Hajji Ni'mat, (1871-1920), who had himself had a spiritual awakening, was of acknowledged sanctity and was the spiritual guide to a number of dervish disciples in the Kurdish village of Jayhunabad, some miles North East of Kermanshah in the West of Iran and near the town of Sahneh. It was there that Ostad was born on September 11th 1895. From the age of six he took part in his father's group's *zehr*, the collective remembrance of God with music and sacred poetry and prayers which lifts the participants sometimes to ecstasy. The music at such gatherings was played on the *tanbūr*, a two or three stringed instrument like a lute, a tambourine, *daf*, a flute, *ney*, and a viol, *kamāncheh*. By the age of nine Ostad was a master of the *tanbūr* and playing it was a major part of his life until near the very end.

Ostad describes the spiritual training he undertook under the close supervision of his father as follows: "I began fasting and spiritual exercises at the age of nine, and kept them up continually for twelve years, taking only ten or twelve days between the forty-day periods of retreat. Usually my evening meal to break the fast was only bread and vinegar, yet throughout that whole period I did not experience any sort of physical discomfort. I almost never went out of the retreat house and I only associated with the seven or eight dervishes who were allowed to enter it. When I finally left the retreat house at the end of those twelve years and came in contact with other people, I could not imagine that it was even possible for human beings to tell lies." [AH 1873 translated by James Morris]. In fact, in the first three years, while still maintaining his fasts, he attended school in Sahneh, but his contact with the outside world otherwise was limited to visiting sacred sites with his father. His time was occupied in contemplation, meditation, the study of sacred texts from different traditions and music.

In late summer in 1906, when he was eleven, Ostad experienced a spiritual transformation at the shrine of Sultān Ishaq, the spiritual founder of the Ahl-e Ḥaqq.. After this he was given the name Nur Ali, and his real spiritual development seems to have begun. Jean During, the distinguished ethnomusicologist and research scholar, in his magisterial study, *The Spirit of Sounds: The Unique Art of Ostad Elahi*, writes: "It is after this event that the doors of the 'supersensible' world were

opened to Nur Ali, and he developed the spiritual gifts and faculties whose manifestations often made an impression on those who approached him and whose mark his music bears. The young boy returned to his habitual practices with all the greater passion now that he constantly perceived signs of the existence of superior levels of reality. His discovery of the metaphysical world naturally reflected on his musical practice. At night, while every one slept, he would close his door, turn off the light, and play. The precise and incisive sounds of his instrument would remove one by one the veils of his consciousness opening to him the contemplation of metaphysical worlds. Ostad has sometimes alluded to these visions and scenes, some of which are the sources of his most beautiful pieces.” [Jean During, *The Spirit of Sound*, New Jersey, Cornwall Books, 2003, pp. 31-2.]

Now while Professor During is right to emphasise the celestial origin of much of Ostad’s music and its importance in his development at this time, it was the regime of ascetic practice leading to a much subdued selfhood, together with the feeding of his spirit with contemplation, prayer and the constant remembrance of Almighty God, that led to the opening of the doorway into higher spiritual realms through the transformed intellect, the aql. We know from other accounts also, that when this happens it can bring visions, revelatory dreams, spiritual journeys, encounters with the spirits of the departed and other such spiritual beings, the inflowing of wisdom and understanding, and the revelation of mysteries. All this Ostad experienced from this time on in his life, and much of it he has spoken or written about.

The twelve year cycle of ascetic practice, begun when he was nine, ended when he was twenty one, and he was then married. In 1920 his much-loved father passed away, aged 49. We know little of what transpired over the next eight years. He certainly rode to Teheran and remained there for a year before returning to the Kermanshah region. In Teheran and elsewhere he frequented musical masters and greatly extended his musical experience. He further continued his ascetic lifestyle, wearing dervish type clothing with his hair rolled up under a turban, and visited mystical groups and performed pilgrimages to various shrines. Jean During quotes Ostad: “The photo in which I am wearing a turban dates back to when I was turning twenty six. I was still immersed in an angelic universe, constantly in an ascetic state and eating only one light meal a day at sunset, the hour to break the fast. Nevertheless, I was in excellent shape and always looked well. When I look at pictures from my youth, a special feeling overwhelms me as I remember the exalted state I was in. The world and everything in it meant absolutely nothing to me. I was in such spiritual exaltation that even thinking about it now still moves me.” [Jean During, *The Spirit of Sound*, New Jersey, Cornwall Books, 2003, pp.34]

It is widely held that there is a climacteric in the spiritual life at the age around 33. This certainly was the case with Ostad. From this ascetic life with its high level of spiritual exaltation and experience, he cut off his long hair, swapped his traditional mystic’s clothes for a suit and took a job in public service in Kermanshah. He certainly didn’t need to do this financially, but, as it turned out, it was sensible in the troubled political circumstances of the time. There must, however, have been a strong inner imperative or instruction to make such a major change, perhaps along the lines of living in this world means just that and not spending one’s life in another world, or, as he put it, being virtuous in isolation counts as nothing, it is being virtuous while living in society which counts. Whatever the case, he later said that before entering public service, he had not realised that the twelve years of asceticism and prayers he had completed in his youth had less spiritual value than just one year spent in the middle of society.

He started off in the Land-Registry in Kermanshah and was then transferred in 1932 to the Bureau of Land-Registration in Teheran. While working there he entered the National School of Jurisprudence and within six months he had mastered the three year course which resulted in his graduation at the age of 38 in 1933. His first judicial appointment was as Justice of the Peace in Larestan in the south from 1934 to 1937, and then he became prosecutor in the District Court of Shiraz from 1937-39. From 1939 to 1941 he was Attorney General of the District Court of Khorramabad and from 1941-1944 he was Presiding Judge of the District Court in Kermanshah and Member of the Land Restitution Commission. From 1944 to 1945 he was Chief Judge of the District Courts and the Commercial Court in the Province of Kerman and from 1945 to 1947 he was Attorney General of the District Court of Qomm. In 1947 he was on leave of absence in Teheran aged 52. From 1948-1950 he was Judge of the Court of Appeals in Kermanshah. From 1950 to 1951 he was Director of the Ministry of Justice in Jahrom in the south and from 1951 to 1955 he was Attorney General of the District Court in Teheran. Finally, from 1955 to 1957 he was Presiding Judge and then Chief Judge at the Court of Appeals in Mazandaran. In 1957 he retired in Teheran at the age of 62.

There are many things of interest in this career path, which Ostad saw as further training by divine Providence. The first thing is the number of different judicial assignments he was obliged to take, which took him to north, south east and west in Iran. It was as if he was being stretched wider to embrace a larger canvas. Since wherever he went he frequented musicians, his musical experience was greatly increased and varied which led to innovations in his own instruments and performance. It has been suggested, probably correctly, that the practical reason for his many moves was that the local notables and dignitaries were uncomfortable with his unflinching integrity. There is no doubt that he was a highly competent, hard working, scrupulously honest officer of the court who saw far more than people wished to be seen, so that arrangements were made to have him replaced with someone more pliable. This often, in fact, resulted in him being promoted to a higher post elsewhere.

But the outcome of this mobility was that he was continually being placed in new often complicated and testing situations. Further he was thereby exposed to a much wider experiencing of actuality than he could possibly have known otherwise. To address these situations and experiences he was required to use all his resources. He was the master of his selfhood, but now he needed its instrumentality and help as never before. He therefore speaks of fortifying his selfhood, of seeking its co-operation. One example of this is that one post clearly his selfhood found very difficult to cope with, so Ostad made all sorts of efforts to get out of it, without success, but he needed to show the selfhood that he had tried everything and failed, in order that it would accept the divine Will. Another example he describes as one of the hardest tasks he had ever undertaken. He adopted a number of children in the course of his career, and then struggled to get his selfhood to love them as much as his own children.

The other component of his nature, his spirit, must have grown from the much wider experiencing of the actualities of this world, as well as the much greater call on its discrimination in a wide range of challenging contexts. But there is another dimension of growth. Almighty God is Lord of the two worlds, this physical universe and the spiritual universe, transcending both while being intimately close to both. Being neither material nor spiritual, God is called Al-Ḥaqq, The Real. If one thought of this world as all fact and the spiritual world as all value, for creation to become reality, that is to reflect the nature of the Creator, it would require the spiritualization of existence and the realization of spiritual value. An unrealized value is as useless as a valueless fact.

Values are realized in acts and behaviour, both passive acts like submission and acceptance and active acts like affirmation and actions. In the first half of his life Ostad mastered his selfhood and nurtured his spirit until it soared ever higher; in the second half he fortified his selfhood, won its co-operation, and spiritualized it, and he realized the values received from the spirit in the acts and actions of his personal and professional life under a range of arduous and testing circumstances. In putting into practice what he had received and in surrendering to the Will of God, he realized both his spirit and his own individuality.

In his retirement, Ostad occupied himself in enjoying his family, in writing, music and in sharing himself and guiding an increasingly large number of people who were drawn to him from home and overseas. Kitāb Burhān al-ḥaqq, the work I spoke of earlier, was published in 1963; ḥāshiyah bar al-ḥaqq al-ḥaqāyiq, a commentary on his father's epic work, was published in 1967; and Ma'rifat al-Rūḥ, which Professor James Morris has recently translated into English entitled Knowing the Spirit, was published in 1969. After his death, Ostad's son Bahram published a first volume of Ostad's oral discourses in 1977, and a second volume in 1991. These discourses were written down at the sessions Ostad addressed with the various groups of people who attended upon him. Gradually a regular group formed itself which Ostad guided spiritually, with discourses and advice, communal prayer and zekr, and by playing his music, but above all by affecting each individual from his spiritual resources and powers. He referred to this as his school, the school of the Path of Perfection, which was open to all who were drawn to it, irrespective of gender, nationality or religion. It was a combination of that which he had received that he was allowed to pass on with that which he had tried and tested in his own life and experience. We will conclude with a far too brief summary of his viewpoint, much of which is unexpected.

Ostad was shown that running through every element of creation, whatever it might be, there is a continuing urge and movement towards perfection. Evolution is evidence enough of this. A human being is a body and a selfhood, that is what a person is, but who a person is, really is his spirit. The body and selfhood die, but the spirit does not die, it passes to the barzakh, the intermediate world specific to this planet. According to Ostad each spirit has fifty thousand years to reach perfection, which is about a thousand lives should they be needed. It is possible to reach perfection in one life, but that is very rare. Each life in a human being is necessary for the spirit to grow to self awareness and develop through the person's acts and experiences, thoughts and intentions the effects of which it retains in the intermediate world and for which it is accountable. When the spirit has settled the accounts of the previous life and is ready to move forward again, a new life is carefully chosen to provide the circumstances for its further development or correction. Although life in the intermediate world is lighter, easier and more exalted, it takes much longer for the spirit to develop there than it does when in a human environment in this world. Therefore everyone is advised to make as much progress as possible while living here. But what is progress and how is it to be effected?

It is unlikely that anyone would be drawn to this path had they not arrived through some religious background which laid out the basic principles of the Almightyness of God, a mode of worship and prayer, a code of ethics and morality and some understanding of a life to come and our eventual accountability. These principles might seem to be externally imposed, but they are extremely important, since, when they are internalised, they are the spirit's nursery school. When put into practice they help the spirit to begin to know itself and reinforce it in its struggle against the self-indulgence of our selfhood. The struggle to gain mastery over the selfhood is the key element

initially in the self-identification of the spirit, since it knows itself through its opposite, the selfhood. This struggle is part of every spiritual path, but Ostad distances himself from the traditional Sufi methodologies. He considers that the relationship of master/pupil, of shaykh/murid, is no longer appropriate today, and he opposes both of the two ways within Sufism: the way of asceticism, zuhd, and the way of love, ishq; the first because it weakens the selfhood when it needs to be fortified to cope in the world, the second because it can lead to spiritual drunkenness, addiction and 'spiritual' escapism.

As one becomes more aware of one's own spirit and has a growing recollection of the presence of God, it is important to cultivate, listen to and to follow the spirit's instrument, the intellect, aql. Not only does it instantly discriminate between right and wrong, true and false, but if you listen quietly within it will show you things you hadn't seen, impart new understandings, particularly about the workings of your selfhood, and give indications and guidance whether by intuitions or dreams. It is the gateway to the spiritual world and has above it the power that can transform the selfhood and bring it to harmony and co-operation with the spirit. It is the intellect that reveals to each of us our obligations and duties and gives us an appreciation of the rights of every element of creation, thereby enabling us to act responsibly towards everything and everyone. Ostad always said that when you come to know your spirit and the spirit knows itself, it will take you down inside itself and introduce you to God within.

But the most significant message of Ostad's path of perfection is that we should live an active life in the midst of society. His ideal was, keeping a constant connection to God, to live a life that maintains an appropriate balance between the four elements: this world, the next world, the spirit and the selfhood. The spirit needs not only to be known, but to be realised and it is realised in act, in passive acts of acceptance, submission and sacrifice, and in active acts of affirmation and helpful, respectful and good behaviour. To realise one's spirit is to realise one's own individuality and to become a real human being. It is not given to many to have the qualities that lead to great achievements in this world, nor to have the qualities that lead to a high spiritual station in the spiritual world, but it is every human being's birthright to have the possibility to be real. Ostad's path of perfection shows how it can be done. In so doing one acquires perhaps the most beautiful and valuable attribute of Almighty God, Al-Ḥaqq, The Real. I am not competent to judge the spiritual station of Ostad Nur Ali AElahi, but from my experience and from that of others it clearly was extraordinary. What I am prepared to say, however, is that in my experience Ostad was a real human being and a true Friend of God. I am grateful to him for many things, but I am especially grateful to providence that I had known him, for such real human beings are very very rare.

I will end this birthday celebration of Ostad Nur 'Ali Elahi with one of his favourite quotations from Rumi:

Mā hame shīrīm, shīrān-e 'alam. ḥamleye mān az bād bāshad dam be dam.

ḥamleye mān az bād wa nā paydāst bād Jān fidāi ānkeh nā paydāst bād.

We are all lions! lions depicted on a flag. Every moment our attacks are from the wind.

Our attacks are from the wind and the wind is unperceived. I would sacrifice my life for that unseen wind.

Thank you Rumi, thank you Ostad and thank you for listening.

HAZARD-THE RISK OF REALIZATION BY JG BENNETT WITH FOREWORD BY A.G. E BLAKE



Peter Bassett

A few months ago, I picked up the book, "*Hazard-The Risk of Realization*". This is Volume 1 of the *Dramatic Universe Series* and was compiled by A.G.E. Blake from John Bennett's unpublished writings and talks years after writing the *Dramatic Universe*. "Bennett was always striving to find better ways of communicating the ideas he considered significant. This was especially true for the central idea of hazard. In 1967, eschewing the elaborate and

precise language he had used in writing *The Dramatic Universe*, he tried a different approach and gave a series of lectures in New York and London that required no special preparation. However, in 1968, he attempted to present the ideas related to hazard in written form at a more abstract level." Both these sources have been used in the compilation put together by A.G.E. Blake.

In many ways, this small 110-page book is a sequel to the *Dramatic Universe* and represents a further distillation of the thinking of JG Bennett on this core subject of Hazard as a key element of the reality we and the universe face in striving (or choosing to not strive) to "realize" higher being and purpose. When I was previously reading the *Dramatic Universe* many years ago, I remember noting how much emphasis JG Bennett put on hazard, but I frankly could not understand why he was focusing on it so much. I remember thinking to myself, "why is he harping on this hazard thing so much"? It was not until I first read this little book a few months ago that I began to grasp that there was something deep in the idea of hazard that I was not getting. I therefore tried reading "*Hazard-The Risk of Realization*" for a second time and gradually little glimpses began to occur. For those of you that have been students of Bennett's and Blake's ideas, I encourage you to read this little book as it represents a further distillation of JG Bennett's thought on this idea which was central to his cosmology and the cosmology of Gurdjieff.

The book starts by introducing the idea that over 4,000 years ago around 2,800 BC, the Sumerian culture was at its peak and specialists would invent "games" to express and preserve certain knowledge." One of those games was backgammon and it reflects a cosmic doctrine that was lost in the nineteenth century (as a result of a focus on the quest for absolute laws) and started being rediscovered in the twentieth century. The principle of the game of backgammon is that one has a certain path to traverse, and one traverses this path by moving from available hole to available hole. However, one does so under the control of a certain "uncertain factor" introduced by the throw of the dice. Bennett chose the word hazard for the title of his writing as a reminder of the way in which this knowledge about the place of hazard in our lives has been handed down for thousands of years.

The fundamental knowledge disappears from time to time because there is something in man that is both terribly attracted by hazard and at the same time terrified of it. We are driven to seek ways of denying the reality of hazard and of looking beyond chance to something that is free from chance.

Man has always tended to project onto his conceptions of God the notion of a being that is beyond hazard, a supreme power that is secure from the chance and uncertainty that we see in the world. In the Foreword by A.G.E. Blake, he quotes from an old Jewish text, "Twenty-six attempts preceded the present genesis, all of which were destined to fail. The world of man has risen out of the chaotic heart of the preceding debris; he too is exposed to the risk of failure and return to nothing. "Let's hope it works", exclaimed God as he created the world, and this hope, which has accompanied all the subsequent history of the world and mankind, has emphasized right from the outset that this history is branded with the mark of radical uncertainty."

A core idea in this book is that the universe and even God are involved in a hazardous struggle to realize a higher purpose where the outcome is far from certain. Gurdjieff went to considerable length to shatter our conceptions of the universe being God's wind-up toy that is wholly determined and under control and instead introduced the concept of discontinuities within processes that allow for the influence of a higher level. This core structure that involves two intersecting levels results in a sacrifice of predictability but enables the emergence of free intelligences that can partake in responsible action in the world and bring back new substance to God. The idea that God is not all powerful but rather needs us as active participants in the drama of realization within the creation is quite a shift from the comfort of either, (a) God's got it all under control or; (b) there is no God and purpose, so who cares.

Realization is possible because the conditioned world has discontinuities into which the unconditioned can penetrate. Bennett goes further in saying that hazard is a boundary layer between the conditioned and unconditioned worlds where we are faced with choices all the time that relate to the potential process of realization of something higher both within and outside of ourselves. Bennett goes on to say, "This is the same as the belief of the Yezidis, and a very few rare religious sects, who think that man's behaviour in the world has a real significance and that taking part in one side or another is able to have some influence on the outcome. In other words, there is a hazardous and dramatic situation in which the choice of even the smallest participant is significant." Therefore, we are positioned in a boundary layer (middle world) between the conditioned and the unconditioned where we can use directed attention to "detect" information coming from the unconditioned side. In this middle world of realization, we are literally involved in making a new reality by intelligently dealing with uncertainty.

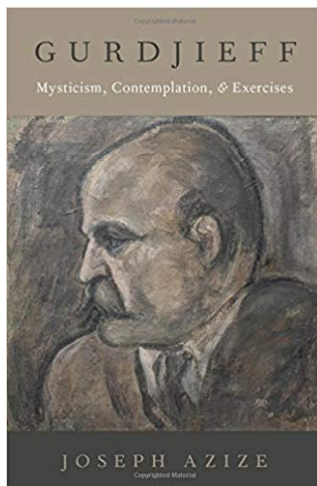
One of the central hazards is at the core of our being and whether we will undergo a transformation within our very core and become realized souls or individuals in the universe. Gurdjieff said that there was a fundamental misconception propagated through latter Christianity that people already had souls automatically. This flies in the face of Jesus' statement of, "*what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and loose his own soul*". The soul is not an automatic birth right but rather something that can be "gained or lost" depending upon how we live. A central theme of this book relates to how we are faced with inner hazard each day and that our willingness to embrace hazard determines the degree to which we can become free beings.

I assume that JG Bennett, Gurdjieff and even the ancient Sumerians went to considerable efforts to attempt to preserve and communicate this key idea because it is a significant element of our reality. I hope that some of you may benefit from this small book along your journeys!

REVIEW - GURDJIEFF: MYSTICISM, CONTEMPLATION, AND EXERCISES (OXFORD STUDIES IN WESTERN ESOTERICISM)

by Joseph Azize

Anthony Blake



This is essential reading for any student of the Fourth Way that derives from Gurdjieff, but also for practitioners of the methods of contemplation originating in the Orthodox Church. Azize is himself a Coptic Priest, based in Australia, with long experience of the Gurdjieff work as taught by George Adie. He has recently devoted himself to bringing the elements of this work into the sphere of scholarship so that it may be better understood.¹

In this book, Azize brings together all available documentation of the 'exercises' Gurdjieff taught over the span of his transmissions. This alone makes it valuable and important. Azize also gives explanatory commentary to each of the exercises and gives them perspective within his narrative of the evolution of Gurdjieff's methods. This narrative portrays Gurdjieff as first insistent on 'work in life' with no provision for 'sitting' under special conditions. According to Azize, it was only later that he instructed his pupils to 'sit in quiet' and practice what amounted to 'contemplation'.

The word 'contemplation' appears only a few times in Gurdjieff's master work *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* but it held great import as a reference to the essential way in which the third or highest 'being body' could develop, requiring quite different work from that involved in the growth of the second being body based on the transformation of air.² In Gurdjieff's work, the development of the second body he called *kesdjan* (of the spirit) is needed as a bridge from the external material world to the divine inner one. In forming the second body we are active but in the development of the third body we need to be receptive.

Azize's narrative conveys a picture of Gurdjieff experimenting and assimilating various influences, notably from Orage but eventually embracing the techniques associated particularly with Mount Athos. It is significant for this argument, in our view, that Gurdjieff is probably citing Igumen Chariton of Valamo when he speaks of the character Hariton (making him an archangel) in his strange chapters on the design of 'spaceships' (we believe that spaceships are a metaphor for movements in the psyche, called by John Bennett 'psychokinetic').

As part of his argument, Azize claims that the Foundation, under the authority of Jeanne de Salzman, lost track of the genuine Gurdjieff exercises as it took on the practice of 'sitting' from the Zen tradition. He is concerned that the valuable corpus of inner exercises developed by Gurdjieff may be lost. His book may help somewhat to stem the tide by involving an audience that extends beyond the Gurdjieff compass and providing documentary scholarship, so sadly lacking before.

Though not cited by Azize, we think it important to mention here the ‘prayer’ or invocation some of us were taught in practising the Gurdjieff movements. These movements can be very demanding and require effort. At the end of a session we would become as quiet as possible in ourselves and pray, “May these, the results of our labours, be transubstantiated in us for our being”. The components or energies of the inner body are produced by effort but cannot be *integrated* from outward effort but only from within.

A much neglected area of Gurdjieff research is that of the inner work contained in some of his movements. Azize claims that such inner work did not come into the movements until 1936, just before the war. We can add here that, according to Wim van Dullemen, the movements created during the war may have been to protect Gurdjieff’s pupils from the dangers they were subject to.³

Azize’s historical narrative resonates with the spaceship innovations described in *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson*. Hasein the grandson declares in wonder that he never imagined that their spaceships were not always as they were now. Gurdjieff’s capacity for radical change has been highlighted by John Bennett in his explanation of the fate of the Saturnian scientist, Gornahoor Harharkh.⁴ The scientist practised the use of ‘artificial djartklom’ which was to produce ‘shocks’ that could wake people up (by separating the three forces in them) but at a cost to their inner lives. This was revealed by his son Rakhoorkh. Bennett argued that Gornahoor was a portrayal of Gurdjieff himself in the early days of the Prieuré and the son of Gornahoor also Gurdjieff when he had learned his lesson.⁵ Bennett himself took on the realisation that it was better for a teacher to renounce being an active force and take on the reconciling or ‘third force’ role.

1. Azize, Joseph. “The Practice of Contemplation in the Work of Gurdjieff.” *International Journal for the Study of New Religions* 6. 2 (2015): 139-158.

2. See BT *aiessirittoorassnian-contemplation* p. 569 and *intentional contemplativeness* p. 783

3. Private communication

4. see BT 149-76

5. ‘Talks on Beelzebub’s Tales’ (2007) pp.112-116

DEATH AND THE DREAMER OF DENIS SAURAT.

Antonio Benet



A copy of *Death and the Dreamer* of Denis Saurat arrived unexpectedly through the letterbox. Neither my wife nor I had ordered the book and only after recovering the envelope from the recycling box did I discover the name of the sender. It was the impulse I had been waiting for.

The book arrived at one of those moments in which, saturated with "conscious" literature, I was wondering what the point of it all was. Saurat invited me to look at the world from a different perspective. I texted my friend: 'This book is a work of art'. 'Why not write an article?' he suggested. Why not I thought: "If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly."

Denis Saurat (1890-1958) published *Death and the Dreamer* in 1946 just after the war. The book is a collection of dreams and visions from the 1930s to the 1940s, which configures the inner development of one man.

Denis Saurat lived in England during the war and was friends with A.R. Orage and C.S. Nott, both pupils of Gurdjieff. At the time they met, Saurat was a professor of French Literature and head of the French Institute in London.

Following Orage's suggestion, Saurat agreed to meet Gurdjieff at the Prieuré. Gurdjieff made a deep impression on Saurat. Nott spoke to Saurat about Gurdjieff's book, *Beelzebub's Tales*, yet unpublished, and lent him his transcript copy.

After reading the transcript of *Beelzebub's Tales*, Saurat wrote to Nott: '*this astonishing book is a work of art of the first magnitude in its own peculiar way.*' He wrote a list of the key points found in the book under the following three headings:

- 1 In the book, there are a number of observations which indicate a **superterrestrial** source,
- 2 Very many of the ideas, though common-sensical, are based on **intuitions** well above the normal,
- 3 Parts of the book are not clear, and we have the right to suspect that G.G. has done this intentionally.

The three headings fit equally to *Death and the Dreamer*,

Death and the Dreamer consists of a series of 5 tales, all of which, Saurat assures the reader, are true in every detail. Dreams, transmissions of thought, predictions, etc. are reported exactly as they happened.

The first story, **Peasant Fears**, speaks of the perennial fears of the village peasant and their relationship with death, and their superstitions and beliefs about the supernatural. The narrative continues with **The Heart's Nightmares**, which tells how the Mother, through the dead Father, communicates with the Son. In the third tale, **The Life Time of Christ**, time and suffering relate to Christ. Christ is the eternal present, and deliverance from fear is deliverance from time and space. Christ created the world at the point of absolute suffering. **High Dreams**, the fourth tale, presents encounters with benevolent beings of higher intelligence bringing hope of deliverance from fear. In the last story, **The Bomb**, fear is transcended at the point of physical calamity and maximum pain.

I will now explore further some of the many extraordinary ideas arising in each of the five sections.

PART I PEASANT FEARS

In **Peasant Fears**, we enter the flow of perennial unresolvable issues moving through the peasant's mind. The underlying current of life is presented in the form of a narrative where the Mother speaks to her Son in a quasi monologue of her early memories in the French Pyrenees. The deep questions of death, suffering and pain go hand in hand with superstitions and beliefs about the supernatural which permeate her memories of a hard and painful relationship with the Father,

her husband, now dead. No trace of sentimentality colours her words. The Son listens.

The dead are at the centre of the mystery. We are to look at the dead without ceasing to see them dead, and yet still having a life. Care was most religiously exercised in the treatment of the corpse. The dead needed to look at their best to attract the approval of the visitor. Should the visitor display any sign of rejection or apprehension at the sight of the corpse, they were at risk of being frightened at night by the dead.

In this tale, Saurat reminds us that without suffering and death, one learns nothing.



PART II THE HEART'S NIGHTMARES

Mother and Son dream of the dead father appearing as an adult as tall as a child of three, but dead, and indifferent, with a sort of eternal quality in his presence. The Mother noticed that the Father was very ill, and must be taken care of immediately. Both Mother and Son knew what was needed, and in the second dream, they saw that the Father was cured. In a third dream, a stranger comes to kill the father, and yet in another dream, the father's body is perceived flying at the top of the church spire. These dreams turn out to be the way the Mother communicates her illness to the Son through the Father.

PART III THE LIFE-TIME OF CHRIST

Six interlocutors bring a series of intriguing revelations about the meaning of Christ:

i *The Old Canon* explains that the creation of the world took place nine months before the birth of Jesus Christ. Christ is the only present and cannot be placed in time and space. He says that our knowledge of BC is only the knowledge of AC expanding from Christ at the centre in all directions, i.e. Plato 400 BC and Agustin 400 AD mirror each other.

ii We are told that Suffering-evil in the world is the suffering of Christ radiating everywhere. Christ took all suffering upon himself to create the world so that we have souls. Christ made himself a man at the point of absolute despair when he believed God had forsaken him. In the belief of being forsaken of the Father is all sin.

iii We are only conscious of our present time (aware or unaware) from which we project our hopes and desires into the future, and our memories and desires to the past.

iv Love is produced by suffering when accepted and offered to Christ.

v In the *Anticlerical Peasant*, we hear that cases of telepathy are habitual in illiterate peasants, but this is of no interest to the peasants themselves. They do not believe in telepathy. When they experience telepathic messages, they consider them unimportant.

vi In the *Negro and the Bishop* we are entering the mystery of time, the narrator says that in sleep you can go to a great distance; if you sleep deeply your spirit can travel several thousand miles or many thousand years; it is the same. In *the Professor*, we learn that all things persist so far as they are thus willed, willing also the turmoil and violence of desire and action. And returning to the mystery of suffering, he says, "God is the only one who suffers, who loves, who feels; we think we do but we are only effective parts of him doing it. In the *Old King*, the subject of reincarnation is discussed. "I do not see how intelligent people can face the world if they do not believe, that

there will be reincarnations, but Stupid people can though". On the mystery of suffering, he says: "all men, creatures, are fragments of both God's suffering and God's joy. Men do not know through their minds, but only through their many joys, many sufferings, many deaths. Liberated to do their own will, they must participate both in the Suffering and in the Joy. Only in our selfishness - without which we could not exist - we separate the two, to avoid the suffering and have only the Joy.

PART IV HIGH DREAMS



In **High Dreams** we enter a scene in which visitors from other spheres come into contact with the man. A man standing in a hut says, "I am ready", and he is taken up by a purple beam... he left the hut, the Earth, the solar system the Milky Way, the world - at least this world! In *Elytreans* he describes the visits of an extraterrestrial who appears twice to observe and study the man, and for the man to study it. By the second visit, the Elytorean had developed an even greater capacity to perceive beyond the level of human intelligence. The event seems to have taken place beyond time. Saurat states the man could understand nothing of the two encounters except on the highest spiritual plane. These strange beings

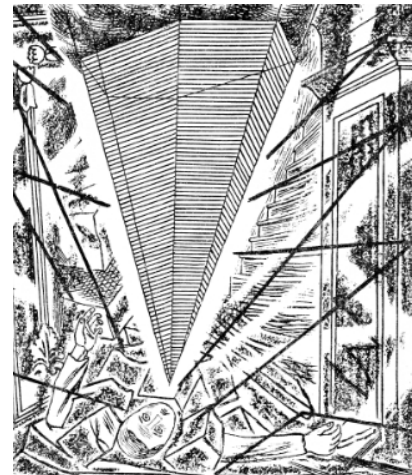
had come in goodwill and he had received them in goodwill.

PART V THE BOMB.

An extraordinary and meticulous description of an instant which occurred between two letters *wi* and *fe* as in the word *wife*. In the instant placed between the two moments of time that separate in the brain the sound *wi* from the sound *fe*, the whole house where the man stood had, instantaneously, piled itself on him. The catastrophe that had inserted itself between two instants, between one moment and the next opened a tremendous valley in which anything, any event, however cosmic, had sufficient length of time to take place.

The text continues with the man being treated for his wounds at Princess Beatrice Hospital. The man woke up realising that while sleeping, surgery took place, but he was feeling no pain, where was it? Pain came, the man had been waiting for it to come, pain washed bones clean -clean of disease, clean of broken cells, clean of rubbish. The pain reached a climax of maximum pain becoming instantaneously total joy.

With the story of *The Bomb* we reach the end of the book. Viewing it as a whole, we have witnessed a striking presentation of the interplay of subtle forces, which, entering from different worlds, configure the present moment of the man. Saurat takes the reader through a maze of the various forms of his experience, through surrealistic climbings and descents, bordering abysses, with the company of pain, suffering and revelation.



The events that took place in dreams are as real as the events taking place in waking time. Worlds of different time and order are present in the now of man. References to the passing into higher worlds abound. In *The Children and the Staircase* story, little children climb a fantastic stairway

that takes them to the **higher world**, immune to fear and death. The slightest distraction in their climbing would have plunged them into the abyss: 'Death, which men fear so much, not children, nor animals.' In the encounter with the second Elytreaan the man says: "time passed, man lived, came and went...then, a moment came when he found himself in the same place, perhaps at the same moment when he had seen the Elytreaan the first time."

Perhaps the most profound revelation comes from the absolute power of pain and suffering. It is through the pain that washes flesh and bone clean that led the man to transcendence. The man says, "in a flash of lightning, the tremendous cataract of pain opened, rent in two in its maximum effort. The soul passed through the opening, into an instantaneous world of complete joy. At its maximum, the total pain had become instantaneously total joy. A cataract of sheer physical pleasure descended, being the other side of the cataract of pain, and the soul had won through."

[Copies of *Death and the Dreamer* are available from Anthony Blake, tony@toutley.demon.co.uk]

MEMORIES OF DR KENNETH WALKER

Chris Wilson



Kenneth Walker was an old man when I knew him, way back in the early 60s. I was a 19 year old university student when I wrote to the Gurdjieff Institute in London to enquire about joining a beginner's group, and he replied inviting me to meet him in his office in Harley Street. As a young man I was full of rage against the society I had grown up in – not a million miles away from the kind of fiery idealism that had prompted so many young Germans to join the Hitler Youth 30 years before – so my first meeting with this scion of the British Establishment was a profound disappointment. Instead of lofty rhetoric, what he gave me was a short talk about our inability to pay proper attention to quite ordinary things, like changing a light bulb. The *reductio ad*

absurdum of my young man's fantasies about Self-Development. Inwardly, I protested. I had read *In Search of the Miraculous!* Surely that was enough to reserve me a place among the Elect?

Well, it wasn't, and I duly joined his Beginners Group which met at the Gurdjieff Institute headquarters in Addison Crescent in the leafy London suburb of Holland Park. His sidekick was a wonderful ex-Army Major called Harold Winterbotham, and they put on a very good double act for us every week. Our task was to bring Observations. It was usual for us to start by saying "I observed..." and then launching into something we'd noticed about ourselves, couched in the terms that Ouspensky used when he wrote about G's teachings: Inner Considering, Remembering Oneself, Mechanicalness and the rest of it. Being young, we were inclined to embellish everything we said with some clever thoughts about the Gurdjieff System, whereupon Mr Walker would cut us short with a stern look: "Yes, yes. But *what did you actually observe?*"

Back we would come with a more austere version of our 'observation', whereupon Mr Walker might give us a short lecture about his favourite subject, which was mystical philosophy. I would listen with quite disrespectful impatience, thinking "This is not what we're here for", but only because I had no idea what he was talking about.

His favourite word, which he would utter with great solemnity, was the word “Being”. When he said that word, he would bring both hands slowly and dramatically down onto his belly, which was not small for a man of his diminutive stature. “Be-e-e-i-i-ng”.

After Mr Walker’s short lecture, Harold would weigh in with a penetrating answer to the question, which never failed to hit the mark. Their different approaches represented two very different ways of responding, one of which carried a profound depth of feeling and the other a subtle intuitive grasp of what the person specifically needed at that moment. My memory is that Mr Walker’s age and solemnity inspired a sense of awe and *gravitas*, whereas Harold’s mental agility enabled us to learn how to make ‘the System’ into a more personally relevant, less abstract reality.

I’ve just noticed that I still refer to Mr Walker by using his title, whereas I’ve always referred to Mr Winterbotham as ‘Harold’. I did get to spend some time with Harold outside of the Group, and I can remember asking him lots of questions about the Gurdjieff Work, which he answered very honestly and without a trace of self-importance. One of them was about Mr Walker’s insistence on lecturing us about mysticism. Surely, I said, that’s not relevant to our aim?

He laughed, and said yes, there’s an element of letting him get away with it because he’s an old man and this is his ‘thing’. But he also suggested that perhaps I should notice what was happening in my body when I was getting impatient with one of his lectures. In those days I knew nothing about the projection of the Shadow, so I was unable to respond to his excellent suggestion.

Ah well, the arrogance of youth.

Some Books

I Talk of Dreams: An Experiment in Autobiography
Ventures with Ideas: Meetings with Gurdjieff and Ouspensky
The Conscious Mind: A Commentary on the Mystics
A Study of Gurdjieff’s Teaching

GO YOUR OWN WAY: A REMEMBRANCE OF JOHN KIRBY (1953-2019)

Daniel Proudfoot



John Kirby, January 2003

I first met John Kirby in October 1997 at an Edward Matchett seminar held on the grounds of the Temenos Retreat Center outside West Chester, Pennsylvania. The quiet and beautiful setting matched well with John’s nature. He was handsome man with an air of sadness about him. He was very low key but also very intense.

The gathering at Temenos was to look deeper into the discipline of Sophiagenics. Sophiagenic’s core idea as articulated by Ted Matchett, is that the “Holy Spirit speaks to each of us continuously throughout the day and night, each day of our lives.” Our ability to hear the messages is contingent on our opening to that reality. Though initially Ted had disseminated his original insight in the language of

religion he provided a more neutral version which became known as the 5M equation: “Media + Matter Makes Meaning in time (delta t). John had a deep intuition into the Truth of the statement and a longing to instantiate this way of understanding in his life.

One of the books that Ted had asked attendees to read had the quote: “Mary will always remain the model and prototype of the Church as regards her maternity. Mary was fertile only by the power of the Spirit. If the Church wants to be fertile, in daily holiness, from an existential and sacramental viewpoint, it must continually renew itself in the Spirit. As the Spirit mysteriously fertilized the Virgin and engendered Christ, so does he continually fertilize Christ’s bride, the Church. And if Mary collaborates with the Spirit so that this generation takes place, so must the Church docilely make itself available to him to become the “mother of saints and martyrs.” This is true for the Church as a whole and also for every individual Christian.” (*The Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of Life*, p.89)

This is a good rewording of Ted’s insight though not as the operational process that Ted synthesized. Matchett understood the significance of an explicit connection between his presentation of Sophiagenics and Mary. Mary exemplified the purest manifestation to the Holy Spirit/ Media that we have available to us. I think John instinctively understood this principle and that gave him extra incentive to pursue a life-long exploration of the significance of Mary, her role, her example and the effect She is having on the world today.

John delivered his own presentation at the seminar in 1997 titled “Making and Maintaining Intimate Sophiagenic Contact with Mary”. I could feel his deep reverence for this sacred image which goes far beyond any representation or story. This sacred image needs to be encountered deeply within oneself in a place that one prepares. Temenos allowed us to create that space and let us prove to ourselves that we could approach something very deep, very subtle just as we are without waiting for “tomorrow”. Someone at the gathering asked John where he was from and what he did professionally? Perhaps as a joke or simply a loose comment someone offered that he was connected to the Kirby Vacuum Company. The implication was that he had substantial wealth. I later learned that he was in quite poor circumstances though he never let on about his situation.



Art at the Talking with Angels event

He had a love of movies and would hardly ever miss the chance at seeing the latest release. At one time, early on, he mentioned somewhat facetiously that his dream would be to have a luxury car he could use to tour around Florida watching movies and listening to music. I believe he felt fundamentally alienated from ordinary life. He knew there was a better story to be told about how to realize our potentials and access the help that is stretching forth Its hand to us.

After seeing him over the next years at subsequent Sophiagenic gatherings I developed a deep respect for his intensity and doggedness in realizing in this life a direct connection with higher influences. In his case, Mary seemed the most efficacious sacred image.

John invited me to become involved in a discussion group which met by telephone, whose purpose was to discuss the writings contained in the book *Talking with Angels*. Every Sunday we talked for about an hour per session; excavating meaning that was revealing itself through the book. There were only five of us so there was time for each individual to express themselves. Most of us had some contact with Ted Matchett and it seemed our association was a natural outgrowth of the action that Ted had initiated. The writings seemed to be very rich which made it fertile material to contemplate. Although the book does not mention Mary in any meaningful fashion there was quite a bit of overlap in the message of the book and the messages recorded as given in Medjugorje by Our Lady.

The story of *Talking with Angels* is riveting in its external setting. A small group of four Hungarians were trying to survive the Nazi occupation and bring meaning into their lives. Tragically, three of the four were eventually killed in Nazi concentration camps. This left only one alive that eventually put into writing the story for the world to hear.

John loved the book because it demonstrated that in some of the harshest circumstances one can still be in touch with and nourished by a living connection with the sacred. John was clear in what he chose to see. And he saw Light. He saw that the gradual illumination of consciousness is a present reality. John wrote about areas as disparate as Edward Snowden and the NSA and the Virgin Mary's appearances in Medjugorje in his article published in *DuVersity Newsletter* 34 titled : "The Living Substance of Light, Increasing Transparency to the beginnings of learning to bear reality". In his article John writes: "To me this is clearly a part of gradual increasing light, inseparable from conscience in its illumination of our seeing of our lives."

John organized an in-person conference for those of us on the *Talking with Angel* call for January 2003. The event was held at a private residence in the foothills of majestic Mt. Hood south of the city of Portland. It was held in a small home and there were eight of us. I arrived from a cold and snow-bound Michigan to the relative warmth of the rainy Northwest which at 50 degrees felt balmy. The rains seemed like a gift coming directly from the Pacific Ocean a short distance to the west. balmy. The rains seemed like a gift coming directly from the Pacific Ocean a short distance to the west.

As we were feeling our way into the flow of the gathering John asked us to meditate on Mary. As I settled in my chair and turned inward, I had an urge to go very deep within myself. I was quite tired of words, either others or my own. Words were a limit to pass through. Within this wordless state an image came to me. This image contained the message of the whole event. Three more They were like a prayer that revealed the four images one after the other in a set sequence. I had lost track of time. I was sitting peacefully, experiencing a warm and sweet sensation in the center of my chest when, completely without effort, I beheld the image of the Virgin and Her Sacred Heart. The image of the Virgin was quite definite but the image of the Sacred Heart was there and not there, I experienced it but not "visually".



Original note of prayer

I was full of joy and contentment and I reluctantly returned to the gathering as John ended the exercise. After a few minutes, John asked if any one of us wanted to speak to the others how the meditation went. Because of the uniqueness of the experience, I volunteered to speak. I was feeling completely calm and began telling of my experience in a very matter of fact manner.

Unknown and unexpected to me after beginning to speak I was overcome with deep gratitude and warmth. I began to sob in deep gasps of emotion as I related the details. Finally, some minutes after completing the event the emotional out-pouring dried up.

It was as if my prayer was everyone’s prayer and that it could only happen with everyone sharing it at the event. I felt that the prayer was not mine: what was mine was the form and the content what was not mine was the openness to pray in the way that you need. This is what came through John’s efforts. John was idiosyncratic in his approach to life and understanding. As I write this remembrance I remembered the central quote of the book *Talking with Angels*. The quote is emblematic of the book and is placed on the title page where the narrative starts. It is also emblematic of John.

“Go your own way!

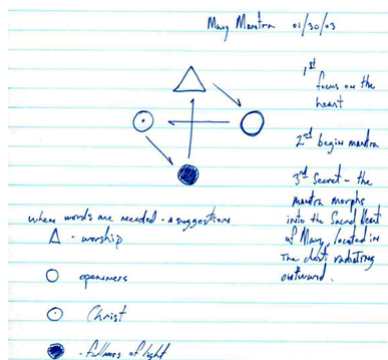
Any other way is straying”

Now that John has passed through this life I am sharing this with everyone as a testament to the power of John’s approach and faith in the coming of Light.

An addendum regarding the prayer: . The forms are images that are spontaneously emergent as one enters into the experience. These images are not “out there”; one embodies them.

This prayer relies on form rather than words. The forms are images that are spontaneously emergent as one enters into the experience. These images are not “out there”; one embodies them.

Although this set of images was experienced by myself I believe any one else would or could have a very different image or set of images that are relevant to themselves.



Later note of prayer with sequence of forms/ words/ stages

For me, the first image (triangle form) came to me while observing my state in front of my desire to contemplate an image, the Virgin Mary. All of the other images arrived as I have written above; they appeared to come directly out of the unfolding of the experience.

It may seem this experience as I relate it is cut and dried; almost formulaic. Actually, the experience was started by a strong desire to contemplate. I had no plan, no formula and no idea as to how to approach this sacred image.

Two quotes from *Talking with Angels* are particularly relevant: “Everything depends on the intensity of the effort”, 36. Dialogue with Lili, and: “Seek the lack in yourself and you will become whole!”, 71. Dialogue. I would add as a third quote (the one already mentioned earlier in this article) to complete my view of the process of this prayer.

A bit after the experience I attempted to document it in more detail than my first note. I noted the inner pattern of attention during what I called then 'Mary Mantra'. The order of the images wanted to be presented in this rhombus form with a definite sequence as the arrows in the diagram indicate. Each of the forms had a particular quality which can only be approximated using words. However, to jog my memory I assigned a word that seems indicative.

In order: worship, openness, Christ, fullness of light. As written in my note, these words are simply a suggestion and any intrusion of words in the exercise is very unhelpful. The glyphs on my note page are not shapes but symbols. Each symbol refers to an inner state. There is an arrow leading from one state to another. The order of the states is more than a visual help; it shows a crude representation of displacement in an internal dimension. In this internal dimension one would say in progressing through the states there is an increasing inward movement with the last displacement inner/upward. My description won't be useful to you in your particular. What may be useful is my injunction to follow the forms that arise through your need.

Four stages of the prayer:

o) Intention - (this was not included in my original note but was directly the start of the exercise.) My intention was to contemplate the image of Mary. Following on from this I quickly understood I had no footing to start. I had a desire but knowledge or means to accomplish the intention. The prayer started from observing my disharmony, my lack, my need. Sitting with this realization the first of the forms arrived and it is not incorrect to say I was the form. Included with this point should be at least of few minutes of relaxation of the body.

1) Focus on the heart - literally focus attention on the center of the chest being aware of the feeling state.

2) Begin the mantra - in my original note I intended to convey a cycling through the forms. One might dwell for extended time on one form and pass quickly over the next. These forms are not "words" they are something in their own right. Further, I only begin to cycle through the forms after all were presented to me. In your case everything will likely be different.

3) Secret - 'Secret' is a problematic word as may imply a striving to an end which was certainly not my experience. 'Subtle' might be a better term as one enters the experience and distances themselves of any thought and any words.

A final thought: Go your own way. Pray in the way you need to pray.

THE WORKING GROUP JOURNAL

Claymont Court, WV, December, 2003

By a participant

This was my first experience in the working group and as I drove from the airport, I felt a sense of anticipation tinged with hesitation as I entered something new and unknown. As I pulled in the narrow driveway leading up to the mansion at Claymont there was a deer standing in the field right by the road just past the pond. I stopped the car to marvel at this auspicious omen, something wild and beautiful able to live in the woods and fields of the estate.

At the first session Anthony Blake and Karen Stephano, the founders of DuVersity, explained that the Working Group is an on going series exploring techniques derived from the integration of two disparate but closely related streams of development in the twentieth century. One of these originated with Freud and the other with Gurdjieff. The first gave rise to psychoanalysis and group psychotherapy while the second gave rise to an 'esoteric' or subcultural 'tradition' known as the 'fourth way'. These techniques are revolutionary in their impact and represent the new edge of awareness for exploring the evolving technologies of inner transformation. The Working Groups form a container where these ideas and techniques can be developed. The various techniques are complimentary and focus on different aspects of human nature and behavior.

The Working Group agenda consisted of seven exercises, each conducted for one hour each day. The seven principle exercises conducted at the Working Group session were:

Experiencing

Social Dreaming

Logovisual Technology

Median Group

Movements

Tissue collage and

Immediate Learning

At 7:00 A.M. the group met in the library for an hour of what Anthony Blake called 'experiencing'. Anthony invited anyone to begin by saying any words or thoughts that might come to mind. Then he spoke for a moment about posture encouraging us to sit with a straight spine in a relaxed yet alert posture. We were sitting in the stuffed chairs and couches of the library with a gas furnace burning in the fireplace. Anthony would then lead us through an hour of contemplative exercises punctuated with brief periods of silence. We each, to our own capability, followed him along the various avenues as he guided our attention into the psychosomatic awareness where sensations arise. He had us observe how sensations garner attention and then concentrated our attention not so much on the immediate content of awareness but on the apperception, the perception of the perception, not the things perceived but the act of perceiving itself. In this way the field of perception became its own object and the phenomena that come to play in that field could be perceived as secondary objects passing across awareness like the changing reflections in a mirror.

The social dreaming sessions were facilitated by Karen Stephano. She described it as a way of accessing dream content where the dream is not considered an individual thing but a reflection of the information field of the group. Accessing this information matrix releases what she referred to as the "unthought known". She explained that we were each to relate any dreams we had the night before or any significant dreams we remembered. Anyone in the group could comment on the dream in the context of the social situation of the working group. It was not so much to unlock the individual symbolic content of the dream but rather to allow associations to arise in the group and let those associations lead the group into explorations of what we know but don't know that we know. This is the knowledge of the preconceptions inherent in cognition and grounded in the way we experience sensation. For example the people on the seacoasts in the middle ages lived with the assumption that the world is flat. However, their experience as they watched ships moving out to sea demonstrated that the earth is curved. Here is an example of something they knew but didn't

know that they knew. The discovery of this type of information often comes as revelation with a self-validating sense of intuitive satisfaction. In this way dreams hold information that was unassumed and unrecognized by the dreamer but had relevance to the situation of the group. This is what Gordon Lawrence, the leading researcher in social dreaming, calls “reclaiming territories from the unknown”. The key to the process is association and amplification to expose the multiversity of meanings and linkages that have been up to then unthought. This reveals the psycho-social meanings that are a new avenue in the “royal road to the unconscious”. Dreams are no longer simply revelations of the personal psychic structure of the individual but delve into the associative network of images in the collective unconscious of the group matrix.

The Median Group is a form originated by Patrick de Mare wherein a small group, larger than a family but less than 20, gathers together to express themselves. It takes place without a leader and without agenda, though there is a convener whose role is to provide an overall containment of the process with the minimum of intervention. It provides a perfect freedom of expression which when practiced quickly leads to the realization that each person is an autonomous agent filled with opinions and prejudices that are taken for granted and often assumed to be self validating. However, in the context of the Median Group, where no one has more authority than anyone else the relativity of these options quickly becomes apparent. This can lead to a sense of frustration where what “I” think and consider to be the “Truth” is not necessarily recognized as such by the others whose own opinions are contrasted against “mine”. This tears away at any authoritarian tendencies and creates an applied democracy that has been unheard of outside of a few utopian communities, nomadic tribal societies or the early beginnings of democracy in Greece. It harkens back to small groups of indigenous people gathering around a fire to discuss the issues of their group. It creates an impersonal fellowship that works to overcome frustration, revenge and hatred transforming this endopsychic energy, exteriorizing it into speech. It becomes a freefloating conversation following associational lines. Bringing back what is for many the lost art of conversation. The hour passed quickly and there never seemed to be any problem finding issues to discuss with associations being the leading guide to how the conversation moved. With no authority figures any dictatorial exhortations were quickly out of place. And in its place was the question, “You got any associations?” This created a kind of radical authenticity which served as a cleansing medium washing through the mind. A sauna for the psyche allowing fears and anxieties to cook in the transformative container of the group education. Whereas in most schools you are learning to do things, here you are simply learning to be, so that things don’t just happen but are done with a deliberation that is freeing and playful, almost child like where you are consciously acquiring playmates. It is both deliberative and free flowing at the same time. The form being deliberate, the content free flowing, a sharing in search of meaning that humanize speech.

Anthony convened the Logovisual exercises passing out small hexagonal blank magnets that served as note cards. The most striking example of how the process works was when he passed out the magnets and told us to write down words or phrases that describe what it means to be human. He then drew a human stick figure on the magnetic display board and asked us to place our magnets on the stick figure in the area where our description of the qualities of a human would most naturally fit. The stick figure quickly filled in with the words and phrases we used to describe human nature. Once the figure was totally filled in, he then gave us the exercise to take each part of the body and look at the terms that were used to describe that part of human nature and then condense them into one word or phrase. We then placed those on another outline and in this way refined our awareness

taking it to another level of abstraction demonstrating how the process moved from one level to the next. This technique was innovated by John Bennett as part of his structural communication technology. It makes thought processes explicit and exteriorizes thinking in ways that are useful for problem solving.

For the movements we convened in a practice room that had a piano. We moved through some of the basic movements originated by Gurdjieff and into others that have been outgrowths of the experience of the generations of teachers since Gurdjieff. In one of them each of the participants was invited to create a gesture or posture and to name a feeling associated with it. These were then combined into a movement using the names associated with the gestures to create a sort of poetic language that accompanied the flow of the gestures. Again it became readily apparent how the flow of the movements kept the mind focused and would not allow the mind to run off on the myriad thoughts that continually arise in our brains. If this inner cognitive stream of consciousness was allowed to intrude on the focus of attention during the movements then the movements were immediately interrupted providing instant reinforcement to hold awareness on the flow of movements as they develop. It creates an awakening in the body such that realization is psychosomatic as well of intuitive and intellectual creating a somatic psychocosmology.

At one point in the movements Anthony told a story about asking Bennett what it was like to be aware all the time. He said Bennett replied that awareness was far too precious to squander on trivial concerns like fixing the tea and that much of the time it wasn't needed and should be saved and savoured for when it was.

For the tissue collage we gathered in the dining room where we could work on the tables. Karen had laid out the piles of brightly colored tissue paper and set up the glue and brushes for each of us. We used 11 x 14 backing boards as the canvas to create the collages. Karen gave us the instructions that the collages were not to be consciously designed. Rather they should be created without thought for how they look or what the finished product should be. The collages were to be created quickly, numbered and dated and on to the next one in a technique originated by the Jungian psychologist Edith Wallace and practiced by Karen for over 20 years. Each collage being an expression of the unconscious rather than the conscious mind.

The technique involved three steps, the first to create the collages, the second to line them up and contemplate them writing down any thoughts or feelings that arise as they are examined, and third to have a gallery show where each person puts their collages on display and reads to the group their thoughts and the group then comments on the collages, adding any insights or associations that come up as they look at the various collages.

When I came to the second step I lined up all my collages under a floor lamp and sat with my notebook and wrote,

Afric dances

Flaming amoebas

Ghostly faces

Strange vistas

Paper bouquets

Framed in the minds demand for ordered arrangement

Colors ripped

Torn to shreds
Falling like snow
Aleatory patterns
Constellating
Mingling
 Mixing
 Bleeding
 Running
Creating their own effects
Art
 Arting
 Itself

The Immediate Learning Method (ILM) was the last exercise of the day starting at 9:00 P.M. back in the library. Anthony would bring out a CD player and put on an unnamed piece of music which would simply play through as we all sat silently listening. The music was in each case an unusual example outside the typical expectations of rhythm or melody. Not that they didn't have rhythm or melody but rather that the rhythm and melody did not necessarily follow the standard rules of expression for western music. The types of things he played were acappella voice renditions of the Jewish Torah and symphonic music by Stockhausen. When the music was finished we were free to go without any follow up discussion. Although there was always some discussion to figure out what piece of music he had played, what language it was in, and what tradition, if any, it followed. It was no secret but the identity of the music was held until the piece was finished. The technique has been developed by Edward Matchett who suggested that it would work just as well listening to natural sounds. The music or sounds allow the mind to bypass its internal interpretive function and tap into a direct access to intuitive knowledge that lies hidden or covered over by the constant clatter of the mind. Anthony suggested that we bring to the session a question or a concern and then, rather than cognitively dealing with it, simply pose the question and relax the mind as it listens to the music and watch what arises for suggestions as to how to deal with it.

The Working Group had a unified intent, explicitly articulated, to allow us to come to grips with ourselves and work to become more aware, more conscious, in an elevated sense that transcends the normal boundaries of every day conversation and interaction. When we give each other the freedom to drive awareness deeper, to intensify it, to create a higher perspective, to find a place inside ourselves that centers our sense of self in a portion of the psyche that is not necessarily in the ego but is still able to be spoken, a place we can react from, yet not be in compliance with or reliant upon our own personal habits, opinions, and prejudices. This is a place more universal, more essential, more primordial, a place that is both fully present in the moment yet removed from the work-a-day demands of jobs and relationships, a place where we are not identified with what we do to make money or to entertain ourselves. This is a port of entry where we are free to find the essence of our individuality in a psychophysiological territory where we are all the same person. In this terrain no one has more authority than anyone else. In this context we are not forced to defend our opinions. Rather, these opinions are like ornaments we wear, psychological ornaments that become manifest out of the circumstances of our education, family, personal and social history, genetics and the

accidents of personal circumstances. Instead of defending personal opinions there is an empathy that comes from finding in ourselves a humanness that is shared in each of us. Once this psychic shift of perspective has begun, we can share what is individual and unique without defensiveness, fear or shame.

GOETHE'S FAUST AND THE MINIMAL ACTION PRINCIPLE: A POSSIBLE UNIVERSAL MESSAGE ([HTTPS://ARXIV.ORG/ABS/1402.1592](https://arxiv.org/abs/1402.1592))

Claudio Verzegnassi and Euro Spallucci (*Abridged*)

1 Introduction

One of the several reasons why Wolfgang Goethe is still remembered by a number of people after such a long time is probably his proposed solution to the conflicting visions of the original structure of the Universe: *Chaos*, as seen by Hesiod [1] or *Logos* (see for instance [2]), as seen by Saint John. According to Goethe, none of the two views was correct. His proposal was that of a quantity that he named *Action*, that should have acted as a mediator of the two opposite extremes that exist in any human being, in particular in the main character of his most famous tragic play, Doctor Faust. [3].

The actual details of this “mediation” are in our opinion fascinating, and will be briefly summarized in the final part of this note, where we shall compare them with the analogous situation that can be observed nowadays in Physics. The reason of this comparison is that, in the historical developments of the Modern (Relativistic Quantum) Physics, there appears a quantity called “ Action ” of a system which has a fundamental relevance, determining its possible time evolution in the presence of any of the existing known Forces via the Hamilton’s Principle.

2 Hamilton’s Principle

The starting point of our investigation is the fundamental Hamilton’s *Principle of Minimal Action*. For a general material system, introducing a Lagrangian function defined as

$$L = T - V \quad (1)$$

where T is the kinetic energy and V the potential one, the Principle states that, when the system evolves from an initial time t_1 to a final time t_2 along the “ correct ” path fixed by the present forces, the integral of the Lagrangian from t_1 to t_2 , i.e., in a less mathematical language, the “ sum ” of the Lagrangian values at all times in the interval (t_1, t_2) , is “*minimum*.” If the system had followed any different, non “ correct ”, path, the value of the integral would have been larger.

Let us briefly review the implications of the Principle in Physics. The most important consequence of the Principle is a set of equations, known as the Euler-Lagrange equations, describing as the system, encoded by L , changes with time:

Euler-Lagrange equations—→ *time evolution of the system*

Once the Lagrange function L is assigned, the Euler-Lagrange equations allows to follow instant after instant its time changes. A priori, different expressions of the Lagrangian might be conceived.

To select the most appropriate Lagrangian for a definite physical situation one follows certain “recipes”, which basically consist in the requirements:

1. mathematical *simplicity*;
2. mathematical *elegance*.

The motivation for simplicity follows from the need for a physicist to extract from the theory experimentally testable predictions. From this point of view, if the model is mathematically so complex to make impossible to recover an even approximate solution of the evolution equations, it is formally sophisticated but... useless!

The second request reflects the belief that “*Nature is beautiful*” and often translates into the existence of symmetry properties which strongly reduce the possible form of the Lagrangian. For example, in Particle Physics it is mandatory to endow the “simplest” possible Lagrangian with, at least, two fundamental symmetries:

More generally, one looks for an “extremal” of the action. Anyway, this distinction is not relevant in what follows, and we shall neglect this kind of mathematical details.

3 “Elevation” and “Awareness”.

It seems to us to be reasonably allowed at this stage to claim that the Principle of Minimal Action appears fairly confirmed by the most severe and accurate available experimental measurements of High Energy Physics. This means that the evolution of an elementary matter state in the presence of the known Forces appears to follow those rules that are dictated by the initial acceptance of the Principle. In the following part of this paper we shall present our very personal view of a possible interpretation of this connection between the Principle and the matter system evolution, that would be strictly connected with the role that Goethe proposed to his Action.

The starting point of our discussion is the search of an intrinsic meaning to be associated with the two relevant energies, $T = \text{Kinetic}$ and $U = \text{Potential}$, that a material system can have. We shall first consider the simplest case of a single elementary particle system (for instance, one electron). Quite generally, we can say that the Kinetic Energy is associated to the motion of the particle, thus a change of Kinetic Energy is only possible if the “velocity” of the particle changes. In particular, if the velocity increases, as a consequence of an acceleration, this energy increases as well, till a final value allowed by the reachable possible velocity (limited in the theoretical Einstein vision) of the particle. We like to interpret, with a touch of imagination, an increase of the Kinetic energy as a “desire” of the material (i.e. massive) particle of approaching its existing absolute unreachable velocity limit (the velocity of the light). This process can be seen as a search for *Elevation*. In this very personal attitude, we shall give the Kinetic Energy the name of “*Elevation Energy*”.

The nature of the Potential Energy is, in this view, different. This Energy is only fixed by the position occupied at a certain time by the particle. Its value would be different, for instance, if the particle were located in different positions with the same velocity. These changes of U would not introduce therefore the previous kind of “Elevation” generated by changes of T . In the same very

speculative and personal approach that we are following, we would give the Potential Energy U , that is only determined by the particle “awareness” of its position, the special name of “Awareness Energy”.

Accepting the previous definitions, we can now derive an interpretation of the Minimal Action Principle. Rigorously speaking, the Principle tells that, in the “correct” motion of a material system from an initial time t_1 to a final time t_2 , the difference between the total amount of Kinetic Energy and the total amount of Potential Energy “accumulated” in the time interval is minimum. In our personal language, we would say:

in the “correct” motion of any material system in the presence of the known forces, the difference between the “accumulated” Elevation Energy T and the “accumulated” Awareness Energy U is minimum.

Until now, we are not saying anything new. In fact, we are only giving T and U , the real physical quantities of the particle, some arbitrary “nicknames”, and re-expressing the Minimal Action Principle in the conventional way, in a rigorously physical language. The next jump is produced by our personal fancy, perhaps intuition, that leads us to replace T and U in the previous formulation and write, in a new different (Universal?) language:

in the “correct” motion of any material system in the presence of the known forces, the difference between the “accumulated” elevation and the “accumulated” awareness is minimum.

The above statement represents our personal “Universal” reformulation of Hamilton Principle of Minimal Action. Our vision of the Hamilton’s Action principle stops now. The possibility of an interpretation that goes well beyond the physical treatment is, in our opinion, open and attractive. We have particularly in mind the definition of Goethe’s Action that we have found in a very recent article This definition (M. Quadrini, *Faust*), that we quote here, finding it definitely impressive, is:

“At the beginning there was the Action. Goethe’s Action represents the synthesis which is requested to grasp the essence of Faust, that in the poem must represent the image of the modern man. The Action is seen as the unique possible existential answer that mediates between the two most natural instincts of every man. These are the instinct of the challenge to God, that each man needs to follow his always bigger, unsatisfiable aspirations (*Elevation*), and the moment of humility, in which the man must remember his mortality and return to his most genuine human values, to the relevance of thinking for the community where he lives (*Awareness*) “

One and All

Goethe

Trs. Ilana Nevill

Finding oneself in boundlessness
an individual would gladly vanish.
For there all weariness dissolves.
Instead of ardent wishes, wild desires,
tiresome duties, and stern demands,
delight arises in self-surrender.

O World-Soul come and suffuse us.
To wrestle with the World-Spirit Himself
then becomes our highest vocation,
calling upon all our strength.
Kind Spirits and Highest Masters gently guide us
to Him who makes and made all that exists.

And to transform what was created,
preventing its striving for permanence,
is eternal action's vital task.
What was not now seeks to be,
becoming immaculate suns and dazzling earths.
Under no circumstances may this action rest.

It is intended to move, to create, and to act.
First taking on form and then transforming.
Only briefly does it seem to stand still.
What is Eternal is constantly active in all things
for everything must disintegrate into nothingness
if it should seek to prolong existence.



The One in All

Margaret Fuller

There are who separate the eternal light
In forms of man and woman, day and night;
They cannot bear that God be essence quite.

Existence is as deep a verity:
Without the dual, where is unity?
And the 'I am' cannot forbear to be;



But from its primal nature forced to frame
Mysteries, destinies of various name,
Is forced to give what it has taught to claim.

Thus love must answer to its own unrest;
The bad commands us to expect the best,
And hope of its own prospects is the test.

And dost thou seek to find the one in two?
Only upon the old can build the new;
The symbol which you seek is found in you.

The heart and mind, the wisdom and the will,
The man and woman, must be severed still,
And Christ must reconcile the good and ill.

There are to whom each symbol is a mask;
The life of love is a mysterious task;
They want no answer, for they would not ask.

A single thought transfuses every form;
The sunny day is changed into the storm,
For light is dark, hard soft, and cold is warm.

One presence fills and floods the whole serene;
Nothing can be, nothing has ever been,
Except the one truth that creates the scene.

Does the heart beat, — that is a seeming only;
You cannot be alone, though you are lonely;
The All is neutralized in the One only.

You ask *a* faith, — they are content with faith;
You ask to have, — but they reply, 'IT hath.'
There is no end, and there need be no path.

The day wears heavily, — why, then, ignore it;
Peace is the soul's desire, — such thoughts restore it;
The truth thou art, — it needs not to implore it.

The Presence all thy fancies supersedes,
All that is done which thou wouldst seek in deeds,
The wealth obliterates all seeming needs.

Both these are true, and if they are at strife,
The mystery bears the one name of *Life*,
That, slowly spelled, will yet compose the strife.

The men of old say, 'Live twelve thousand years,
And see the need of all that here appears,
And Moxen* shall absorb thy smiles and tears.'

* a piece of jewelry, usually containing a gemstone, that can produce mana

These later men say, 'Live this little day.
Believe that human nature is the way,
And know both Son and Father while you pray;

And one in two, in three, and none alone,
Letting you know even as you are known,
Shall make the you and me eternal parts of one.'

To me, our destinies seem flower and fruit
Born of an ever-generating root;
The other statement I cannot dispute.

But say that Love and Life eternal seem,
And if eternal ties be but a dream,
What is the meaning of that self-same *seem*?

Your nature craves Eternity for Truth;
Eternity of Love is prayer of youth;
How, without love, would have gone forth your truth?

I do not think we are deceived to grow,
But that the crudest fancy, slightest show,
Covers some separate truth that we may know.

In the one Truth, each separate fact is true;
Eternally in one I many view,
And destinies through destiny pursue.

This is my tendency; but can I say
That this my thought leads the true, only way?
I only know it constant leads, and I obey.

I only know one prayer — 'Give me the truth,
Give me that colored whiteness, ancient youth,
Complex and simple, seen in joy and truth.

Let me not by vain wishes bar my claim,
Nor soothe my hunger by an empty name,
Nor crucify the Son of man by hasty blame.

But in the earth and fire, water and air,
Live earnestly by turns without despair,
Nor seek a home till home be every where!

