

# Anthroposophy & Contemporary Philosophy in Dialogue

Observations on the Spiritualization of Thinking

by *Yeshayahu Ben-Aharon*<sup>1</sup>

What a great pleasure it is that I am able to be here with you. This is the first working visit that I have made to France. Strangely enough, though I don't speak or read French, I have always closely followed the development of French cultural-spiritual life in the twentieth century and today and have been engaged particularly for many years with French thinking and philosophy. And I would like in this lecture to make you aware of the role French thinking plays in the invisible spiritual drama of our time.

I referred to what took place in the 20th century behind the curtains of world events in my books, *The Spiritual Event of the 20th Century* and *The New Experience of the Supersensible*, both written at the beginning of the 1990s. There I described my spiritual-scientific research on the esoteric, super- and sub-sensible realities graspable only by means of modern spiritual scientific research methods. Until the 1960s very little light was created on the earth at all—and so much darkness. Not that the darkness-producing forces and events have diminished since then; on the contrary, they increase exponentially. But the good news is that in all walks of life, thought, science, art, and social life, new forces of hope started to flow in the 1960s, and in my books I described the hidden sources out of which these spiritual forces are flowing. And some of those rare and precious rays of light emanated from French creativity in the second half of the last century.

During the whole European catastrophe of the 20th century, before, between, and after the two world wars and during the cold war, there took place in France a very intense and vital debate, intellectual but also cultural and political. The forces at work in thinking, with all their ingenuity, were not yet strong enough to penetrate social and political realities; many believed them to be so “revolutionary” and radical, but they could never really break through to new social ideas and social formations. But in the field of philosophy it was different; here some true creativity took place which was indeed striving to break new ground.

The last century had an enormous task coupled with the most grave and fateful results for good or ill. This task can be described in various ways. For our

<sup>1</sup> This lecture was given to members of the Anthroposophical Society in Alsace-Lorraine, in Colmar, Alsace, France, on June 1, 2007. The occasion was initiated by the late Christine Ballivet, and its publication is dedicated to her.

purposes tonight, because we are approaching this task from the point of view of the development of thinking, we can call it *the spiritualization of consciousness*, or more specifically, *spiritualization of the intellect and thinking*. This is an expression often used by Rudolf Steiner. His whole impulse, the utmost exertion of his will and love, was poured into this deed. And his life long hope was that free humans would do what he himself was striving to do: truly to transform themselves! He had hoped that this would be achieved at least by a limited number of people already at the beginning of the 20th century, and that it would then be taken up by ever more people during the course of the whole century, reaching a certain intensive culmination at the end of the century. In a transformed manner it would then powerfully enter the global scene of the 21st century as world-changing creative power.

## New Beginners

It is not enough nowadays that one person does something alone even if he is the greatest initiate, because others should no longer be simply led or pushed in his steps—unless we are speaking of impulses of evil. The good can only spring forth from the depth of free human hearts and minds, working together in mutual help and understanding.

And if you look at the world situation today, anthroposophy included, from this point of view, you can surely say: well, then, we are definitely only at the very beginning! We are all therefore kindly invited to begin again, anew. If we understand truly what was said above, we are asked *to see ourselves as real beginners*. Ever more people should understand that the *Zeitgeist* is now seeking new beginners, and is quite fed up with so many “knowers” who are constantly creating havoc in our social, spiritual and economic life.

This spiritualization of the intellect is the first and unavoidable step needed as foundation for further transformations of human nature and society. It is the precondition for the spiritualization of our social, cultural, political and economic life. This is our main entry point, simply because *we have become thinking beings* in recent centuries. Everything we do starts from thinking, and wrong thinking is immediately a source of moral-social destructive forces, while truthful thinking is a building and healing power.

For this reason Steiner referred to his so-called “non-anthroposophical” book *The Philosophy of Freedom* as his most important spiritual creation. By means of this book,

he said, if properly understood and practiced, each person can *begin*, without any former spiritual knowledge or belief, from her or his daily thinking consciousness, daily perceiving consciousness, daily moral activity and social experiences. Each can start *here* from where one stands in real life.

And I have had the experience, early on with myself and now also with friends and students in the world, that with *The Philosophy of Freedom*, if you take it in the right manner, it is indeed the case that it gives us powerful means to realize this spiritualization and bring it to consciousness. This was my own spiritual-scientific way of development from my 21st to my 35th year. After starting from Steiner’s general anthroposophical work, I then concentrated specifically on his philosophical-social work. For the building of the Harduf community, on the one hand, and for my spiritual research, on the other, I searched for *the hidden stream of becoming of anthroposophy*, for its living supersensible continuation.

How can Steiner’s starting point for thinking be continually updated, brought into the stream of the developing *Zeitgeist*? This was my burning daily problem. I was also aware of the retarding forces at work inside his legacy. So I was conscious early on that I must create my own way as I go, alone, and that it is not simply given out there. And when you search in this way you have to find Michael’s footsteps in history and in present day spiritual, cultural and social life. This is the reason why I was intensively following the new developments in the sciences, arts, and social life, and also in thinking and philosophy in the course of the whole 20th century.

Then I found, through life itself, through my work itself—and this applies for my own experience, one cannot generalize—that whenever and wherever I looked for a way to continue after 1925, after Steiner’s death, the way to a further development of thinking and the spiritualization of the intellect was leading to the abyss opened with the last two German thinkers—the converted Jew Edmund Husserl and his National Socialist pupil Martin Heidegger—through the ruins of European culture in the Second World War, and into the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>2</sup> And it was in this following in the tragic steps of Husserl and Heidegger that I came to French philosophy, because the French thinkers were the most ardent and receptive pu-

<sup>2</sup> I wrote about my knowledge struggles in this regard in the introduction to the German translation of my book, *The New Experience of the Supersensible*. I describe the development of my spiritual researches in an interview added to the new English edition (2008).

pils of German thought. Therefore, in order to introduce some central figures of French philosophy I will have to briefly summarize the decisive turning point in German spiritual history.

## A German Excursion

The first German thinker who was acutely aware that the time of German idealism and Goethe's time had gone forever and cannot be revived was of course the great and tragic *Nietzsche*. He literally lost his mind in his efforts to find new, unforeseen venues to spiritualize thinking. And as historical symptom and clue to the gathering storm leading to the German tragedy it is significant that precisely in those years, the end of the 1880s, Steiner was working on his philosophical dissertation *Truth and Science* as basis for *The Philosophy of Freedom*. When the latter was published in 1894 he wrote to his close friend Rosa Mayreder how greatly he regretted the fact that Nietzsche could no longer read it, because "he would have truly understood it as a personal experience." Now,



Friedrich Nietzsche



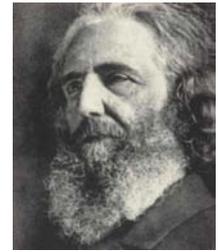
Edmund Husserl

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was a contemporary of Steiner; he also studied philosophy in Vienna under Franz Brentano one or two years after Steiner studied there, probably in the winter semester 1881-82. They almost met in Brentano's classes, as it were. Karma couldn't have spoken more clearly, because Husserl

was striving to develop Brentano's thinking further and created his phenomenology in the direction of Steiner's *Philosophy of Freedom*. But Husserl's radicalism was not radical enough; he didn't overcome the deeper limitations of traditional, Kantian philosophy. This left in German thinking a yawning gap, an abyss, before, during, and after the First World War, which was the most decisive time for European and German history.

And the year came in which German destiny, and Europe's, was to be decided: 1917. In this year Lenin is sent by Ludendorff in a sealed train carriage from his exile in Zürich to organize the Bolshevik revolution in the East; and the US enters the war from the West. Middle Europe's fate was in the scales, tipping rapidly to the worst, and Steiner initiates social threefolding as a last rescue effort. Also in 1917 Brentano dies; Steiner publish-

es a "Nachruf"<sup>3</sup> to Brentano in his book *Von Seelenrätseln* [*Riddles of the Soul*]. Here philosophy, anthropology, and anthroposophy are brought together for the first time in a fully modern and scientific way, without any theosophical residues—free, that is, from traditional occult conceptions and formulations. This book states clearly that Steiner is now ready to start his real life task as a modern spiritual scientist and social innovator. But his hopes to create a world wide social-spiritual movement collapsed already before his early death in March 1925.



Franz Brentano

After Steiner's death Max Scheler, an original and free-thinking pupil of Husserl who met and appreciated Steiner, converts to Catholicism in 1927, the same year in which Martin Heidegger's influential book *Being and Time* is published. In his destiny as the last German thinker Heidegger embodies the destiny of his people. He could not rest content with phenomenology, and justifiably so; nor could he open himself to the new impulse working in the direction of *The Philosophy of Freedom*. Instead, he transforms Husserl's phenomenology backward instead of forward, to create in German intellectual life a powerful and highly suggestive intellectual *Umstülpung* (a reversal *inside out*) of *The Philosophy of Freedom*.

Between Husserl and Heidegger the tragedy of German spiritual life plays itself out in the late 1920s and 30s, until in 1933 Heidegger delivers his infamous *Ant-rittsrede*, his inaugural address as Rector of Freiberg University, presenting himself as an enthusiastic Nazi. Later he also supports the excommunication of his aging teacher according to Nuremberg's denaturalization racial laws. Husserl, fortunately for him, dies in 1938. The decision that fell already in 1917 was now made fully visible, and with it the fate of Germany and Europe as a whole.

Since Nietzsche's and Steiner's time it is rather a strong either/or situation: thinking can be either *with* the spirit of the time or be strongly *against* it. Heidegger's unquestionable greatness was forcefully mobilized to serve the adversarial spirit most opposite to Michael.<sup>4</sup> But nowadays only an abstract intellectual, or a fanatic religious believer, would believe that he can



Martin Heidegger

<sup>3</sup> Literally, an "after-call." —Ed.

<sup>4</sup> Rudolf Steiner identified the *Zeitgeist* or Time Spirit or "spirit of the times" as an actual spiritual being of the rank of archangel, with the Archangel Michael performing this role since 1879. —Ed.

know *in advance* the difference between truth and falsehood. Anthroposophy is also sometimes taken up in this manner.

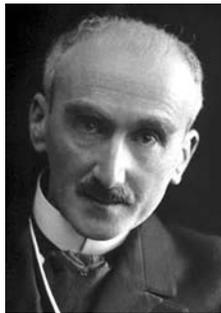
Practically speaking, it is precisely the case of Heidegger which demonstrates the difficulties one faces when one strives, through real experience, to discern the difference *between truth and falsehood*, especially where they are *reflected and deflected by the threshold*.<sup>5</sup> If you imagine the threshold level as mirror surface, then one of the pair would appear as a sub-threshold and polar brother, even a twin, but turned upside down to create a counter-picture, a mirror-opposite of its upper-threshold origin!

Here I would like to point to a very significant fact that has served my work well through the years. By struggling with present-day thinking in various fields one is highly rewarded not only by finding true Michaelic inspirations, but also through the painful uncovering of adversarial streams. They, too, can teach us a great deal, and first hand, concerning Michael's true intentions precisely because they strive to do the very opposite!

From this point of view we may begin to understand a great riddle, namely, why Heidegger became perhaps the most influential philosopher in 20th century Europe, and for French philosophy in particular. And why Levinas said—and he was a close personal student of Heidegger in Freiburg—“we must admit, we were all unfortunately Heidegger's students.”<sup>6</sup>

### The French Philosophical Century

Since the 1920s and 30s, between the wars and during and after the cold war, we find a great series of French thinkers who always begin by assimilating German philosophy. The most recent philosophical food supply for French thinking comes from the great fourfold German *Götterdämmerung*<sup>7</sup> stream: Hegel, Nietzsche, Husserl and Heidegger. Let us now



Henri Bergson

invite and introduce briefly a few of these thinkers. But this introduction can only be episodic and fragmentary, a flitting and momentary inscription on a narrow and rap-

idly vanishing path.

A beginning can be made with another born Jew, Henri Bergson, contemporary of Steiner, resurrected from oblivion by Gilles Deleuze who used as one of his major starting points Bergson's *Matter and Memory* from 1896, two years after *The Philosophy of Freedom*. Then we have the great phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, born 1908; his 1945 book *The Phenom-*



Maurice Merleau-Ponty



Maurice Blanchot

*enology of Perception* is a fine study of sense perception and perceptual consciousness, and who pushed the limits of perception increasingly into the supersensible, striving to transform sense-perception and body experience into spiritual experience. Somewhat at the other pole is the “dark” Maurice Blanchot, born 1907, whose *The Space of Literature* (1955) exerted strong fascination through the later century. And then we are already with the greatly influential Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980).

Sartre transformed the fundamental ontology of Heidegger into phenomenological existentialism; during the war he wrote his main work, *Being and Nothingness* (1943) as a reply to Heidegger's 1927 *Being and Time*. Read the chapter on “the look of the other” in this book, and you will find a most exact and bril-



Jean-Paul Sartre

liant phenomenological research of the perception, being and relation of *the other*—something without precedent in the history of philosophy or science.

After the war we see the emergence of the stream of French structuralism with Levi-Strauss and his school among others. They had a significantly fruitful influence, right up until our times, in anthropology, sociology, myth study, and ancient cultures. But this was all prologue, setting the stage for what will become the truly exciting thirty years—1960s, 70s, 80s—in which one after the other you see the most brilliant stars appear, shining over the intellectual horizon of France, and now world renowned. Then it was all beginning, but I am sure you are all familiar with those remarkable names, names like—? Names like—? (*No answer and laughter in the hall.*)

5 The threshold between the physical and spiritual worlds. —Ed.

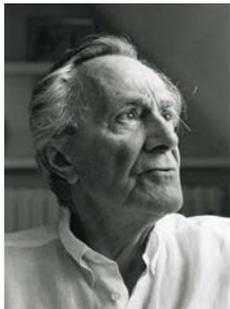
6 This isn't the place to enter into Heidegger's philosophy in detail, an interesting and timely study that should perhaps be realized in Germany.

7 *The Twilight of the Gods*, last opera of Wagner's Ring trilogy. —Ed.



Jacques Derrida

First let us name another Jew-born—yes, they are still all over the place, despite some efforts. I mean Jacques Derrida, an *Algérien*-born Frenchman. He is now rather famous, but not always truly understood, as founder of a philosophical stream that he called “deconstruction.” Derrida took an opposite (or polar) path relative to Foucault and is often portrayed as his opponent; toward Deleuze he was more of a friend, from rather far away. His effort was directed towards deconstructing and dismantling the centralistic and centralizing, monotheistic father-god forces working in past and present philosophy and literature. But this was not the goal in itself, rather a means of *uncovering the peripheral forces working in language and writing*. Derrida discovered and described some of the formative strategies of decentralized, peripheral forces that in spiritual science are called “etheric formative forces,” and he revealed the *texture of the text*, the weaving of text through the warp and woof of language’s artistic tapestry.



Jean-François Lyotard  
(photo: Bracha L. Ettinger)

Derrida was increasingly influenced by Levinas and turned his attention to ethical, political and religious investigations, studying the problems of radical *alterity*, the transcendental *otherness of the other* as unbridgeable difference. He died October 9, 2004 and has an ever growing circle of influence, felt strongly in the Americas; he is one of the few philosophers of the 20th century to become known as a cultural figure outside the philosophical milieu.

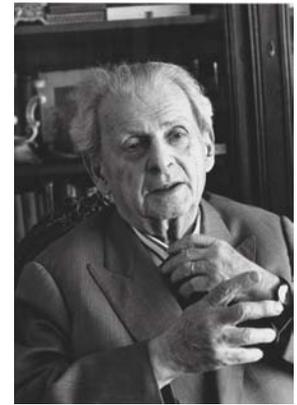
The concept of “postmodernism”<sup>8</sup> is articulated for the first time as a philosophical concept in Jean-François Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition—A Report on Knowledge* (1979). Inspired by Kant’s idea of the experience and cognition of the sublime (part of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*), he tried to create a non-positivist, “event-ful” concept of knowledge and art, and to apply it to social and political thought. We could name others here like the truly brilliant Paul Virilio, original

<sup>8</sup> The term “postmodern” is sometimes used generally of the recent French thinkers, but it is philosophically misleading. All the central thinkers I mention did not consider themselves “postmodern” but even its opponents. Levinas, Derrida and Deleuze spoke strongly against it.

thinker of modern and post-modern technology, military affairs, urbanism, and architecture. And how can we not mention Jean Baudrillard who died last March (2007), a sharp-minded observer and critic of electronic communication and globalized media and TV, who also wrote the short and remarkable “Spirit of Terrorism” after the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York.

And then we come to Emmanuel Levinas, mentioned above in connection with his teacher Heidegger, a Lithuanian-born Jew who became orthodox after the war and remained observant of the commandments and Torah for the rest of his life. He is beside Derrida the most widely known French philosopher of our time, and his influence is also steadily growing. His innovative and radical concept of “the other” is introduced not through phenomenology as developed by Husserl, Heidegger, or Sartre, but through such remarkable concepts as “the face of the other” and “the mortality of the other”—*to which I am primordially responsible*. Levinas believed this to be the only way to create a “contra-Cain” force, which he saw as the true mission of Judaism that was suppressed by western philosophy, Christianity, and middle European culture. He sought to resurrect Abel and find the answer to Cain’s primordial fratricide, which he experienced as repeated on a European and global scale in the 20th century, especially in the annihilation of the Jews (as original Abel’s sons) by the Germans (as modern Cain’s sons), but also in every persecution of the weak wherever they are. This constitutes the essence of his thought: *I am my brother’s keeper!* In this manner Levinas tried to bring a new religious-moral impulse into the philosophical and cultural-political discourses and consciousness of the post-Holocaust world.

The last of these great figures to be mentioned now, because our time is short, would be Alain Badiou who still lives and works today, a militant Maoist-Leninist who began as a disciple of Sartre and the French philosopher of psycho-

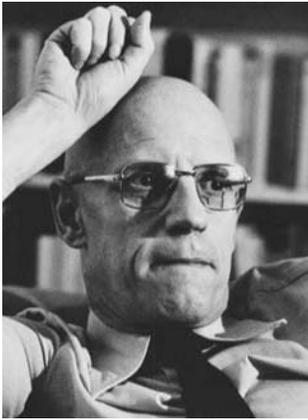


Emmanuel Levinas  
(photo: Bracha L. Ettinger)



Alain Badiou

analysis, Jacques-Marie-Émile Lacan, and was grooming himself to become the lifelong contender against Deleuze. He is the rather lonely and last star still shining in the twilight of a truly wonderful French philosophical century. Badiou wrote an excellent students' introduction to his thought called *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, and he wrote the best book on St. Paul that I have read in recent literature. Yes, it belongs to the strange and audacious symptomatic of our time that a non-repentant French Maoist-Leninist writes the best book on St. Paul!



Michel Foucault

of Europe in the last century and the vacuum created by the disappearance of German thinking.

But now there was one so daring and inspiring in his originality that in a way he towered over them all, so much so, that Deleuze said: "The author who wrote *The Archaeology of Knowledge* makes it possible for us to hope that true philosophy will again be possible." And he meant Michel Foucault. "Foucault is closer to Goethe than to Newton," Deleuze writes in his fine book *Foucault*, because just as for Goethe "the light-being is strictly indivisible condition, an *a priori* that is uniquely able to lay visibilities open to sight and by the same stroke to the other senses," so with Foucault's new concept of *language and thinking: their essential being* is the imperceptible force that *makes all discourse visible and possible at all*.

And this is the reason why Foucault could prepare and open the way for the very most significant French thinker of the 20th century, Gilles Deleuze himself. Even the otherwise careful and rather restrained Derrida, speaking at Deleuze's funeral, exclaimed: "The author of *Repetition and Difference* [one



Félix Guattari

of Deleuze's main books] is the sublime philosopher of *the event*." Like a sun which outshines all the French intellectual stars but also contextualizes them, giving them their historical formation and placing thinking on its way in the trajectory and direction of its future



Gilles Deleuze

cosmic destination and constellation, Deleuze fully deserves Foucault's statement, "The whole philosophical 20th century will one day be called the Deleuzian century." And elsewhere: "...a lightning storm was produced which will bear the name of Deleuze: new thought is possible; thought is again possible."

It was Deleuze, alone and together with his collaborator and co-author Félix Guattari, who pointed out philosophy's future role and task, in all his writings. Aphoristically speaking, let us pick one statement which can be inscribed—from the point of view presented in this lecture—as a symptomatic signpost in the evolution of philosophy. We find it in his last book, written with Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* There we find this statement:

**The sole purpose of philosophy is to be worthy of the event.**

This powerful transformation of the role of philosophy by Deleuze is a result of a common project, to which each of the above mentioned thinkers contributed, starting with Heidegger who was the first to thematise *the event* as a central philosophical concept. Suffice it here to say that with this concept Deleuze expresses a complicated and multi-levelled happening, which he described and varied repeatedly in his works during three decades.

Translated somewhat into our words, this "event" will be understood as pulsing systole and diastole, a breathing of immanent life, the always occurring incarnation and exarnation process in every single element of matter, space-time and consciousness. Deleuze conceived life and sensibility as existing everywhere in nature, culture and cosmos with and without organic-bodily or material foundations. If we rephrase his statement in this sense we may formulate it therefore thus:

**The sole purpose of philosophy is to be worthy of the ever pulsating, breathing, vibrating movement of universal immanent life.**

## Riddles and Problems of the Spiritualization of Thinking

Over against Guattari & Deleuze's revolutionary restatement of the meaning and essence of philosophy, we will place now some of Rudolf Steiner's statements. He says, for example, now that the role of philosophy is fulfilled (meaning, at the end of the 19th century), we must have the courage to let the lightning of the will strike directly into thinking through the wholly singular being of the individual person.<sup>9</sup> This will element can fire thinking and release it from its bodily fetters, freeing its wings to soar and ascend into the open cosmic etheric universe. Then it will no longer be the same "I" who thinks, but *it will be the stream of cosmic thought that flows through my transformed being*. "IT thinks in me" will become a truthful experience and real supersensible event.<sup>10</sup> But precisely



Rudolf Steiner, 1905

9 From Rudolf Steiner, lecture of 7 October 1922, Stuttgart; in *The Younger Generation*, René Querido, trans.; p61-3: "This is the very significant situation at the end of the nineteenth century: Certain circles realized that the old intuitions, the God-given intuitions, were no longer there; that if a man wants to prove with his head the ideas of the people of old, moral intuitions simply disappear; science has silenced them. Human beings even when receptive are no longer capable of receiving moral intuitions. ... So, on one hand, there was the alternative of withering. ... The other alternative was to become fully conscious of the following: With the loss of the old intuitions we are facing Nothingness. What can be done? In this Nothingness to seek the 'All'! Out of this very Nothingness try to find something that is not given, but which we ourselves must strenuously work for. This was no longer possible with passive powers of the past, but only with the strongest powers of cognition of this age: with the cognitional powers of pure thinking. For in acts of pure thinking, this thinking goes straight over into the will. You can observe and think, without exerting your will. You can carry out experiments and think: it does not pass right over into the will. You can do this without much effort. Pure thinking, by which I mean the unfolding of primary, original activity, *requires energy. There the lightning-flash of will must strike directly into the thinking itself. But the lightning-flash of will must come from each single individual. Courage was needed to call upon this pure thinking which becomes pure will*; it arises as a new faculty—the faculty of drawing out of the human individuality moral impulses which have to be worked for and are no longer given in the form of the old impulses. Intuitions must be called up that are strenuously worked for. Today what man works for in his inner being is called 'phantasy.' Thus in this present age which has, apart from this, silenced inner work, moral impulses for the future must be produced out of moral phantasy, moral Imagination; the human being had to be shown the way from merely poetical, artistic phantasy, to a creative moral Imagination." Emphasis added. —Ed.

10 "It is not merely I who think, for it thinks in me—world-becoming expresses itself in me and my soul provides only the stage upon which

this remarkable spiritual achievement—the "IT thinks"—poses serious problems of epistemology, identity, and of course ethics, which cannot be resolved by means of present day philosophy and science.

The main problem here is this: when "IT thinks" in me, who is this "me" in and through which "IT thinks"? In the night, when *IT* really not only thinks in me but also builds and shapes the foundation of all my existence, my ordinary self-consciousness totally withdraws and is wholly absent.

I become unconscious in order to allow *IT* to take over my existence, because my ordinary self cannot yet fulfill at all, in spiritual self consciousness, the needed maintenance of my whole being. Therefore in the night, and also unconsciously during the day, I am given to *IT's* cosmic guidance, and healing forces, and beings.

I hope I have succeeded in making this problem a bit more problematic and concrete for you: how can this *depersonalization and over-personalization process* be experienced consciously? How does the one self—the ordinary—go out, and the other—the Higher Self—come in? And who is the "one" (now already two, and it will be further multiplied the more the spiritualization process advances!) that mutually recognizes, organizes, and brings these two—and the many—into harmonic composition? And in what sort of *self-consciousness* would this "IT thinks" become conscious?

The same problem can also be expressed in this manner. Steiner said that he regarded Descartes' famous statement, "I think therefore I am," as nothing less than "the greatest failure in the evolution of modern thinking... because precisely there, where I think, I am not... because ordinary thinking is mere empty picture, image, representation, and is bereft of any real, substantial being."<sup>11</sup> This statement characterizes an essential existential as well as experience of contemporary philosophical as a whole and especially of the French philosophers above.

What contemporary philosophical thought could achieve to a certain extent and in various ways and different degrees, is part of this first aspect, namely, the "cosmization" of thinking and the realization of "the thought

*the world lives as thought.*' Philosophies can, of course, reject this attitude. ... [It] is an idea that can be acquired only through inner experience." Rudolf Steiner, *A Way of Self-Knowledge*, 1912; p.69.

11 See among other works of Steiner *The Foundations of Human Experience*, trans. Lathe & Whittaker, 1996, p.50.

of the outside” and the “IT thinks inside” (Foucault-Deleuze); but such thought felt that it must completely sacrifice the reality of the subject, the individual, to achieve this. With this complete sacrifice we cannot concur. Yet we must also admit, as pointed out above, that apart from Steiner’s own lived, initiatory example, we do not have first-hand descriptions of a successfully carried-out experiential solution of this dilemma.

Altogether we may say: contemporary philosophy did develop, in an original and new manner, some aspects related to the spiritualization of thinking, but stopped at the threshold in relation to the deeper problems of the “I”. The celebrated though little understood statements of Foucault on the death of the subject, author, etc., can only be understood as symptoms pointing to this unresolved problem, as we will see later in greater detail.

Let me summarize briefly the first main stages in the process of the spiritualization of thinking and then indicate the full meaning of Steiner’s understanding of “the sole purpose of philosophy.” If the transformation of thinking through the “direct lightning of the will” takes place, and thinking *becomes a singular event*,—when I have come thus far with spiritualizing my own thinking, I have as a matter of fact caused the nullification and emptying of my ordinary soul and mind contents. Now because my ordinary experience of my self is nothing but the sum-total of these contents, when they disappear, *my ordinary self disappears as well*. I forget my subjective inner life, which as it were goes to sleep. In its stead, *IT thinks* flares up. *IT* flows into the empty, self-less place, and *IT* thinks *through this place* as a wholly other, alter-Self. As a result the following may occur: *IT* now jolts my otherwise unconscious *real* Self—not the subjective, conscious, *personal self* that is already obliterated—rather *IT* jolts my *real* Self out of the physical body. And this real Self **may** find his way to Humanity’s Higher Self, swimming and flying on the waves and in the currents of the *real* “world-wide-web,” spread out and mingled with infinitely multiple and diverse non-organic living cosmic forces, events, and beings.<sup>12</sup> But this is the central problem: *IT thinks* alone cannot guarantee that this meeting will take place. The force needed to enable the meeting between my real Self and Humanity’s Higher Self, can only be found elsewhere. But where?

<sup>12</sup> Deleuze called the elementary precincts of this world the realm of non-organic, immanent, infinite life. He explored it in great detail especially in the second of the pair of volumes he coauthored with Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* from 1972 and *A Thousand Plateaus* from 1980, which together are subtitled *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

Therefore, it is immensely significant to notice how Steiner refers to pure thinking also as pure love in these words from *The Philosophy of Freedom*. When the thinker *becomes one with* the stream of “love in its spiritual form that flows through thinking,” he or she realizes and individualizes this experience as a “moral intuition,” conceived freely out of the spiritual worlds, and brought down to the Earth through individual deeds of love. This second side of the spiritualization of thinking has to do with the free love for the Earth, humanity, and physical life as a whole. In other words, spiritualized thinking can create a connection between the two selves—the human and the cosmic—only if it becomes an expression of love. Only then can it connect the Higher Self experienced outside the body, and the human self that receives the moral intuition and must protect it and make it real on the Earth.

Now if taken from both sides, namely, from the cosmic experience of a Self as part of the non-organic world of life forces and beings, and as a source of moral intuition to be realized on Earth, Steiner’s following statement may be appreciated in its full weight. He says<sup>13</sup> that philosophy’s future purpose will be “to save human self-consciousness” in order that self-consciousness can be remembered *at all* as humanity advances further in its present and future spiritualization process. If this remembering of self-consciousness is not achieved, the spiritualization process will still continue, because the evolutionary time for it is due. However, it will lead humanity away from its true Self and its true mission on the earth and in the universe. This means that philosophy has truly something to be “worthy about”: *the salvation and redemption of self-consciousness for all future stages of the spiritualization of humanity*, without which human consciousness will not be able to enter in a healthy way into the spiritual worlds.<sup>14</sup>

In the Deleuze-Guattari vein we can now finally paraphrase the statement quoted above from their book, *What is Philosophy?* We may now reply from our own side:

**The sole task of philosophy is to be worthy of the event of spiritualization of self-consciousness and remembering of the true ‘I’.**

<sup>13</sup> In GA 137, Lecture of June 12, 1912, Oslo.

<sup>14</sup> A detailed treatment of these problems is the basis of my book *The New Experience of the Supersensible*.



The author at Steiner’s Berlin home.

## The Absent Great Dispute

Our characterization of philosophy's "sole purpose" resounds strongly to meet Deleuze's challenge as a *warning and admonition* from the side of the Michaelic stream. This warning is truly not given to foster pedantry and intellectualism, but on the contrary, to balance the true and real *but one-sided* impulse of the contemporary spiritualization of thinking. It is precisely because the spiritualization of thinking *does* advance further and becomes real, and because thinking has truly begun to merge with the stream of cosmic forces, that this message resounds from Michaelic spheres, encouraging the thinker not to forsake the mysteries and problems involved in the extremely complicated and contradictory relations between the ordinary earthly subject and personality and the Cosmic Ego, also called the Christ, or Higher Spirit Self. This task is something wholly new in human evolution and is perhaps the most crucial impulse of the immediate present and near future, namely, *to create a self-conscious bridge between the earthly self and supersensible consciousness.*

Philosophy understood in this way will offer the only means "to save the self-conscious 'I'—self consciousness as such—for supersensible consciousness." In other words, the clairvoyant, on achieving true spiritual consciousness, must be able to look back and remember—in the first stage of spiritual development—her or his "I". And this *saving of self-consciousness* can only be achieved through spiritualized thinking, in the direction indicated by *The Philosophy of Freedom*.

Now, as mentioned above, it is precisely in connection with the concept of the "I" that post-modern thinking has the greatest difficulties, because this problem cannot be addressed by means of pure thinking alone, be it as spiritualized as possible. The "I" problem must be approached from a polar and opposite side; and this side marks the place of real absence in Deleuze's thinking also, although, as with so many aspects of Deleuze, his absent "I" is much more alive than many dead and frozen concepts concerning this "I"!

From this point of view I would like to turn your attention next to the possibility of a remarkably fruitful *spiritual battle*—concerning the problems of the "I"—and *dialogue*—concerning pure thinking—that could take place, provided that anthroposophical thinking has advanced far enough that such problems become its true living problems. As I said above, I have myself been benefiting greatly from engaging in this battle for the last

thirty years. And I would like to try to ignite in you also a little spark of enthusiasm for *true spiritual battle*, true dialogue of the spirits, minds, and hearts.

Here a richly and mutually rewarding "disjunctive synthesis" (to use Deleuze's unique phrase) could have taken place—but never did, because what could traditional anthroposophy bring, authentically, to this field? As just described, only genuine individual achievement can stand up truthfully to this challenge and face the real power of contemporary philosophy's achievements. Self-transforming anthroposophy benefits greatly from engaging contemporary philosophy—along with the arts and sciences, of course. This is so because contemporary philosophy grapples rather unconsciously with the same problems that one encounters if one begins to realize the actual first steps in developing supersensible consciousness.

In accordance with the medieval manner of discourse—which was much more civilized (that is, truthful) than ours—we may use the term "dispute" for this rare and unique dialogic battle or battled dialogue—*for a true combat of the spirits*. The greatest of spiritual battles was preordained but never fought in history, because the spiritual battle of the 20th century, as I mentioned above, was decided for the worst early on. When in the second half of the century and especially towards its end the great culmination of anthroposophy should have taken place, only the other stream was culminating, alone. Its true opponent was simply not present out there to fight, because its decisive Michaelic battle was lost already in the beginning of the 20th century.

However, this was only the first century of Michael's present age as *Zeitgeist*, with the first of three great battles, and so many smaller ones in between! Presently we are humbly striving to prepare some suitable starting points for the second great battle—the battle of the 21st century. Now that we are seriously working on self-transformation, and with it on true spiritualization of the intellect, we are strongly attracted to our rivals, or to their legacy, because our living striving is asking for a true dialogue-battle, without which it cannot thrive and develop further. And we will have at our side Deleuze's being, leading, and the beings of his colleagues. They will serve as a strongly awakening, reminding, and truly challenging warning—and as a stark temptation as well—so that we may realize on the earth, now and in the near future, the great supersensible battle raging in the spiritual worlds closest to us, between Michael and his hosts and the adversarial—but always also helpful—spirits!

## Some Personal Remarks

So we can say, Gilles Deleuze went farthest toward fulfilling this task of the spiritualization of thinking, but he accomplished it in a strongly one-sided way. With Deleuzian thinking we have before us at the end of the 20th century the best example of how far one could have travelled to bring this goal to a certain temporary culmination. And as I continued to study the development of consciousness through the scientific, political, artistic, philosophical, and anthroposophical developments of last century, I had to say to myself again and again: here at the end of the century we have this wonderful line up of characters, thinkers as well as artists and scientists, across the whole century, so brilliant, so shiningly original, who strive to bring thinking further.

Then I looked at my own efforts, and in order to develop my own anthroposophical thinking further, I had to work through these schools of thoughts, I really had to delve very deeply, without prejudice, into the work of many individual thinkers. I really had to struggle in order to transform each stage, each person's thinking, each decade, to arrive at what these developments could offer as part of the stream of the ongoing spiritualization of the intellect: enriching, challenging, also tempting and misleading.

I experienced myself pretty much alone in this battle. Even among thinking anthroposophists I couldn't find anybody who wished to engage with this struggle explicitly, in this sense of spiritual battle. There were of course always those eager to refute each other, and also post-modern philosophy. That was always there; but I wasn't interested in refuting anything or anybody, I was trying through these thinkers to grapple with the deeper spiritual impulses at work, which either corresponded to our Time Spirit, or fought against it, or mixed the two in many bizarre ways. There I could find some important and hidden footsteps and clues that guided me on the way of the spiritualization of thinking. Of course the same non-dispute happens all the time also on the other side. One could not discover any wish to be even slightly aware of Steiner's contribution in those thinkers that I have mentioned. And their conscious un-knowing was served well by the absence of presently engaged anthroposophists!

That was, and still is today, a strange situation. I asked myself, what's happening here? It is as if I am observing a strange dramatic performance. The stage is set and some

players are busy performing; they speak and act wholly unaware of the grotesque situation. They are not aware that the other players, their counterparts, aren't even there! What I see is only a half-play, a spiritual dramatic piece cut in two. The real script isn't played out, and what is played isn't the real script at all! This should have been a whole scene of battle, but we have only a half, the other group is playing no role whatsoever in the script that they themselves wrote! They wrote it bravely in spirit, with the strength given to them by Michaelic beings in the sun sphere, in the supersensible Michaelic school; but on the earth they have forgotten, and in that sense also betrayed, the roles they appointed for themselves before birth.

It really should have been, from the beginning of the century to its very end, a perpetual huge battle—and a most fruitful dialogue, because spiritually seen a true, sincere dialogue is also a battle. A real brotherly dispute should take place between thinkers deeply connected to anthroposophy and the thinkers I have mentioned above. This grew very clear as the end of the century drew near.

This dispute was prepared in the middle Ages and was predestined to take place in the 20th century. But we live in the age of freedom, in which all former scripts are easily changed by the present decisions of the present players! Some eight hundred years ago, in completely different spiritual and social conditions, this battle did take place, in the high Middle Ages. Let me touch upon this particular historical as well as karmic background, in order to outline also the present and future battles that face us now.

## The Great Medieval Dispute

In the high Scholasticism of the Middle Ages, beginning with the Platonic renaissance of the 12th century and developing in the 13th and 14th centuries, there was



Albertus Magnus

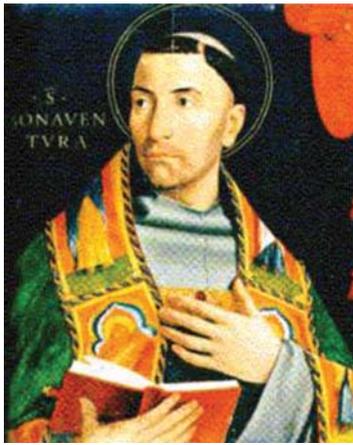


St. Thomas Aquinas

an enormous philosophical, spiritual battle, mainly here in France, in Paris and its university. Here the great Scholastics were striving mightily to unite Christian theology with Aristotelian philosophy, under the leadership of Thomas Aquinas, his older teacher Albertus Magnus, and their extended circle of students from the Dominican order. They were engaged in fierce struggle on several fronts. We shall name only one and indicate this only in outline. One powerful opposing stream comes from members of the Franciscan order. This order presents a series of outstanding religious and philosophical teachers. In the 13th century they were headed by “Doctor Seraphicus,” as St. Bonaventure (born John of Fidanza) was called because of his ecstatic religious-mystical devotion and temperament. He was personally initiated through a miraculous cure at the hands of St. Francis of Assisi himself. Bonaventure was a contemporary and powerful opponent of Thomas’s effort to unite and thereby transform Christian theology with his renewed Aristotelianism.

Thomas died in 1274, and for us the most interesting personality isn’t a contemporary but a thinker and theologian born around 1266, who developed his thinking career in Thomas’ wake. He is also not such a clear-cut opponent. In the Scholastic traditions he is considered to be a unique Realist, in opposition to the main Franciscan tradition, and he considered himself an independent pupil of Thomas and Aristotle, more an innovative successor than Thomas’ enemy. Indeed, he diverged and contradicted Thomas in many original ways on important theological and philosophical matters. I mean here the truly brilliant and original philosopher Johannes Duns Scotus, known as “Doctor Subtilis” because he enjoyed synthesizing varying and opposing elements in surprisingly untraditional assemblages. (Let me remark in parenthesis that the *philosophy of being* of Scotus, specifically his teaching on the categories and on meaning, was the subject of Heidegger’s “habilitation” dissertation in Freiburg, 1915; for the esoteric-karmic undercurrent of our lecture this is also a symptomatically telling fact.)

Many differences traditionally seen between these rival streams must be significantly modified today; especially in



St. Bonaventure



Johannes Duns Scotus

the case of Duns Scotus they are far more complicated, and very interesting indeed. In the customary understanding, the Aristotelians, or Dominicans, are known as Realists. What does it mean to be a Realist in the middle ages? It meant on the one hand to be able still to experience thinking as part of the cosmic intelligence, and on the other, Aristotelian side, to experience thinking as strongly connected with the human soul and spir-

it, with the thinking individual. The Dominicans with Thomas at their head could still capture the last remnants of spiritual content and substance that had come from the spiritual worlds in earlier epochs, but now they were striving to grasp it firmly with their thinking as it became earthly and human. Above all they were struggling with what was already a problem for Aristotle almost 2000 years before: *the riddle of the spiritual nature of the human being and the problem of immortality*. In the Christian High Middle Ages the question was formulated thus: religion promises the hope of salvation and immortality through faith in the revealed divine message of the Bible; but would it also be possible to think—and in thinking not only logically to prove or disprove but actually to *experience and realize*—the immortality of the individual human soul?

Their Franciscan opponents belonged to the so-called Nominalists, because they could no longer experience thinking’s true spiritual-universal being. Due to this inability, Franciscans trying to gain knowledge of spiritual matters, apart from established religion, were searching for it in more mystical-ecstatic ways. An interesting corollary is that this avoidance of thinking in matters pertaining to the deeper spiritual quest adorned their striving with a peculiar mystical and intuitive brilliance. It was endowed with a lustre of the supersensible that, for more spiritually inclined persons, temptingly outshines the conscientious, painstaking, and seemingly dry labor and technique of thinking developed by the Dominicans—those Steiner refers to as truly loyal at heart to the cosmic intelligence ruled by Michael.

Another interesting trait of some leading Franciscans was their effort to bypass Aristotelian-Platonic ideas with the help

of otherwise marginalized Stoic traditions. The Stoics assimilated a rich and diverse mixture of philosophical and religious elements right before and after Christ, drawing on Gnostic and pagan traditions. Before neo-Platonism they were already keenly attentive to the awakening inward and individual soul life of the human personality, as well as *the growing darkness* surrounding its fate on earth and after death.

Steiner described this unsolvable problem in one of his karma lectures. He recounts a discussion between a young and an older Dominican. He speaks movingly and intimately when he describes this event. The younger Dominican spoke to his older teacher: Look, master, the ancient spiritual power—originally Michael’s—that still inspired the thinking of Plato and Aristotle, Plotinus and Scotus Erigena, is dying out. People in the future will not be able to experience it any more. And he said further: If things continue as they are, then people will lose all spiritual substance and truthfulness in their thinking in the future. And this thinking, the heavenly intelligence, which streams from Michael to the earth, will fall prey to Ahrimanic-demonic spirits that will use it to drag humanity into the abyss of materialism and corruption. Michaelic cosmic intelligence, still administered by the gods in ancient time, will be transformed into increasingly Ahrimanic thinking in the not so distant future.

He went on to say that something has to happen now on earth through us, in the human soul itself, to prepare a seed for future transformation that will be available when Michael starts his new epoch. This seed must be prepared now in order to sprout to life in an age in which otherwise only materialistic-intellectual thinking will prevail. And he said: For now we must hold apart the powers of faith and of thinking, but in the future this separation will no longer serve humanity. The new seed must be there at that future time to enable at least few humans to spiritualize in their hearts and minds the fallen intelligence, and so to connect it again with true spiritual reality.

The great champion of the Realists, the “silent ox” as Thomas Aquinas was nicknamed, tried with all his strength to prove that when a person thinks by means of the *nous poeitikos*, the active intellect, rather than the *nous pathetikos*, the passive intellect, he may unite his soul intimately with real spirit substance; then he may rightfully believe that after his death, though he will be carried to heaven on the wings of Christian salvation, he may find his individuality again, endowed with a full self-consciousness similar to the intensive, active human self-con-

sciousness on the Earth. All this could only be hoped for and believed in, but not yet fully experienced in the individual soul. Individual immortality could become self-conscious experience neither before nor after death. It was not yet possible to experience how, through the actualization and realization of living, intuitive thinking, human individuality is transformed and immortality becomes a reality as supersensible experience, so that the human “I” can live as a conscious eternal being in the spiritual world *right here and now*, and therefore also after death.

Steiner adds that indeed only the preparation for this could be made, and that Thomas Aquinas died with this burning question, this huge problem, because he could not resolve it in his time. And Steiner formulates this question of Thomas thus: “How can thinking be redeemed? How can the Christ impulse [the spiritual “I” power] enter into thinking?”

But what is the so-called Christ impulse? What is this spiritual “I” power? It is the power of transformation, the power of metamorphosis working in the individual human soul, reaching also into thinking and leading it, transformed, from within, back to the spiritual worlds; and doing so in such a way that the eternal nature of the “I” will be realized in the process. In other words, if the “I” is to become immortal, it must first become so here on the Earth, through free human activity. This becoming is what is truly meant by “the Christ impulse.” This Thomas could not accomplish in the 13th century, but Steiner realized and actualized this task at the end of the 19th century, when the new age of Michael began. He expressed this self-realization in *The Philosophy of Freedom* and all his subsequent spiritual-scientific work.

This may allow us a glimpse of what is working behind the curtains of human history, and how karma works from one age to the other. The 20th century was supposed, among other things, to become again a fruitful time of a great new dispute between the reborn Dominicans, together with their more platonically inclined colleagues from the school of Chartres, and the reborn Franciscans who already in the 13th and 14th centuries experienced thinking as a fallen, earthy-human element, and searched for redemption through other venues.

In the 13th century, Nominalists and Franciscans said: Thinking is only a human-earthly faculty; thinking can only give names to sense-perceptible objects and to humanly fabricated concepts. If there is a universal intelligence (and many of them did believe it), it doesn’t enter human thinking. Human thinking is as sinful as

the whole human being and cannot partake in the grace of having an actual, presently real, heavenly origin. Divinity in its real essence is wholly transcendental, totally beyond human cognition; with thinking no human being can grasp supersensible reality nor find there his eternal individuality.

Today (as contemporary philosophers) they say: the human subject, the earthly personality, has no significance! They proclaim “the death of the subject” as in the Middle Ages they denied the immortality of the “I”! Today the meaning of human personality as such is deemed unreachable and unknowable. As then it was disputed whether there are real universals, now the existence of the single object, the single personality, is denied as well.

The great dispute of the middle ages was taking place in the 13th century between Realists and Nominalists, and externally-historically the Realists seemingly fought a lost battle. Inwardly, however, they prepared the ground for what was to come to light in the new age of Michael, which is now present. And we are still at the beginning of this new battle, though we are well into the second Michaelic century!

Today ordinary humans like us must find the courage to become again true beginners, to try humbly but sincerely to take the first and most elementary step in this direction. Can we release the imprisoned heavenly intelligence and transform it in our hearts so that thinking can break through to a genuine spiritual reality? Can it become real *event*? Can we produce in this process a real spiritual “I”—an individual-singular being? And what really does it mean to become neither single-private personality, nor abstract-general universal being, but truly “singular” being?

## Back to the Future

Returning to what for the Realists was the future, let us go back to the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Steiner publishes *The Philosophy of Freedom* in 1894 as individual-singular-spiritual achievement, unaccepted and unrecognized by general middle-European culture. This is the inaugural event, laying the foundation stone on which the future spiritual life of humanity will be built. For the very first time in history a human being was individually able to realize, in and through the spiritualization of the intellect, in and through pure thinking, an actual production and creation of the eternal, moral, spiritual substance of

a human individuality as a genuine self-conscious spirit-reality. And he could achieve this remarkable deed as a free and modern human being, without depending on any given mystical or atavistic supersensible consciousness or esoteric traditions. It is a free deed of actualization and realization of new selfhood through cosmic thinking. The power of transformation, transubstantiation, and metamorphosis, had been so strongly individualized in the Middle Ages that an answer could now be given to the unresolved riddle and problem with which Thomas Aquinas died: *How can thinking be redeemed, and with it and through it the human self?*

This was the main theme of my 1995 book, *The New Experience of the Supersensible*, which I subtitled: *The Knowledge Drama of the Second Coming*. At the beginning of this book I placed three quotations which for me summarize the drama of the century’s end, the culmination of the struggle to achieve even a minuscule individual seed of this vast human task. To these three I will now add also a quotation from Deleuze.

The first quotation is from Heidegger, celebrating man’s life-unto-death as expressing the essence of his being. The second is Foucault’s famous statement concerning the disappearance of the human being as we know it. The third demonstrates Deleuze’s real struggle with the legacy of his Franciscan forerunners, trying mightily to solve the riddle of individual immortality. The fourth is from Steiner’s words written on his death bed as concise future directive.

These passages are arranged in a certain ascending order—from a profound denial of everything that the Michaelic impulse of our time is striving for (Heidegger), through the two greatest representatives of contemporary French philosophy, Foucault and Deleuze, to Steiner, who was there first in time, but is and will be always the last one to be understood by our culture.

Being held out into the nothing, as *Dasein* is ... makes man a lieutenant of the nothing. We are so finite that we cannot even bring ourselves originally before the nothing through our own decision and will. So profoundly does finitude entrench itself in existence that our most proper and deepest limitation refuses to yield to our freedom.

– Martin Heidegger, *What is Metaphysics?* 1929

It is comforting, however, and a source of profound relief to think that man is only a recent invention, a figure not yet two centuries old, a new wrinkle in our knowledge, and that he will disappear again as soon as that knowledge has discovered a new form. [...] Then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea.

Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 1966

Every event is like death, double and impersonal in its double... Only the free man...can comprehend... every mortal event *in a single Event* which no longer makes room for the accident... It is at this mobile and precise point, where all events gather together in one, that transmutation happens: this is the point at which death turns against death; where dying is the negation of death, and the impersonality of dying no longer indicates only the moment when I disappear outside of myself, but rather the moment when death loses itself in itself, and also the figure which the most singular life takes on in order to substitute itself for me.

– Gilles Deleuze, “Twenty-First Series of the Event” in *Logic of Sense*, 1969

*If this were all*, freedom would light up in the human being for a single cosmic moment, but in the very same moment the human being would dissolve away. ... We are here pointing to the abyss of nothingness in human evolution which man must cross when he becomes a free being. It is the working of Michael and the Christ-impulse which makes it possible for him to leap across the gulf.

– Rudolf Steiner, “The Freedom of Man and the Age of Michael” in *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts*, GA 26, January 1925

In 1929 Heidegger named the human being the *Statthalter des Nichts*—a “commander of nothingness.” And he said: the whole of human existence is founded only on death, on finiteness. That was the first “statement” through which the reversal of human history was made philosophically conscious—and then politically and socially realized in so much ending and annihilating of human lives. There can scarcely be a formulation more profoundly anti-*Philosophy of Freedom* than this one.

Remember what I said at the beginning: Heidegger’s influence is arguably the most significant one in 20th century philosophy—at least until Foucault’s prophecy is fulfilled, that “the 20th century will one day be called the

Deleuzian century.” Now when Foucault writes, 33 years after 1933, he says: the human subject, the ‘I’ as we know it, is a momentary phenomenon, caused by the evolution of consciousness in the 19th century; and it is rapidly disappearing. This is a somewhat better statement than Heidegger’s! First, because Foucault isn’t speaking about the essence of the human being as being finite, as Heidegger does; and second, because human essence is for Foucault exactly this: the process of open-ended becoming, of transformation—and in this sense not finite at all. He says: our understanding of the human subject changes, it will be different in the future. So he really means: the death of the 19th century *concept of the subject* is occurring in the 20th—a fact that can also be supported from anthroposophical perspectives as I indicated above. He never meant to announce the end of the human being!

The third is a typically suggestive passage from the post-modern thinker who experienced, perhaps more than any other thinker in the last century, that we are *crossing the threshold*, that great eventualities await us on the other side. But more than that, *he knew very well* that we *have already crossed* and *are living on the other side*, wholly unforeseen and uncharted, and facing infinite new frontiers. This thinker is Gilles Deleuze.

In Deleuze we find wonderful descriptions of what one can experience and express in concepts and words, if one has spiritualized one’s thinking to a certain extent. One experiences the essence of life: “We will say of pure immanence that it is A LIFE, and nothing else.... A life is the immanence of immanence, absolute immanence: it is complete power, complete bliss.”<sup>15</sup> The same experience has a twin, an “other” or flip side, that comes organically woven with it. If one has come so far as to experience the essence of pure life, one has begun at the same time also to lift into consciousness the unconscious and real (that is, *living*) death processes that underlie ordinary thinking. Death begins to rise to consciousness, and begins to reveal its true being, namely, *the (veiled) gate to eternal cosmic life*.

When one is so far on the path that thinking becomes an experience of life-in-death and death-in-life, one can experience truly that “this is the point at which death turns against death; where dying is the negation of death.” And when, moreover, one experiences with one’s released etheric body the cosmic, impersonal, non-organic life forces, one knows also that “the impersonal-

<sup>15</sup> From the essay “Immanence: A Life” in *Pure Immanence – Essays on a Life*. New York, 2005.

ity of dying no longer indicates only the moment when I disappear outside of myself.” And that means, if we turn the negative way of speaking to its positive sense: *The impersonality of dying indicates the moment in which the true I AM appears outside my ordinary self.*

One comes then closest to the spiritual-scientific mystery of the “I”, and only a hair’s breadth, grace’s breadth, separates one from being granted this experience. While the mental image, the *Vor-Stellung*, of the “I” disappears, as we pointed out above with Foucault, and the *IT*, the impersonal life-forces of cosmic thinking, begins to think through me, then the real “I” is resurrected and comes to consciousness in and through the impersonal cosmic stream. This real “I” is a being of resurrection, and one can experience its reality at this stage neither through cosmic thinking nor through personal volition, but only through a gift of grace. *IT* is the vehicle, or chalice, not the giver of the grace; the giver of the true “I” can only be the being of humanity’s “I”, the Higher Self; the Christ.

And Deleuze, with everything that he brings with him from former life, can advance so near—but “only” so near—to the cusp of this moment, to the threshold of this grace. And as a matter of fact it is so, when one has really spiritualized thinking so far that one can experience impersonal cosmic thinking—I really mean *experience*, not merely *think* the abstract concept—then one really doesn’t find there again the mental pictures of the ordinary self, the subjective subject that “thinks and therefore he is.” In this moment, that self is nothing, and the *IT* is all; and therefore Deleuze could also not find it in his authentic experience of crossing the threshold of life/death. How close he stands there, on the threshold, facing boldly the being of death and *experiencing how death dies*. But he doesn’t see really *into what death dies*; he cannot produce enough fire to concoct and conduct the alchemical combination that alone can fuse entirely—annihilating any difference in between—absolute, pure, immanent life with absolute death. He therefore doesn’t see *what*, or better *who*, faces him; *what happens* at that very moment; which *event* takes this sacred place of time. He cannot experience what he has at hand, namely, how “through the grace of the real ‘I’ life becomes death and death becomes life”—how *in Christo morimur: how we die into the fullness of life*. But how movingly close he does come to unravel His secret, when he experiences “the moment when death loses itself in itself, and [becomes] *the most singular life... in order to substitute itself for me.*”

The moment when this substitution occurs is the

most sacred that one can experience after ordinary death. The beginner-initiates that we can become today may be granted the grace of this sacred moment in the midst of physical life. We may truly grace-fully die... and may experience in full consciousness exactly how this “most singular life”—the Higher Self—will “substitute itself for me.” Only in this manner can the battle of the middle Ages that truly took place, and the battle of the culmination of the 20th century that remained almost entirely virtual, be still realized in the course of the 21st century. This is indeed our humble elementary mission.

Now *what makes freedom into reality?* Not intellectual “reality,” but moral-human and at the same time supersensible *achievement?* It is precisely this that the Franciscans say is impossible in principal, and in Deleuze’s case we can even see how this becomes manifest in his individual and very personal karma. Look at his fingers, and compare them with Brentano’s hands that Steiner described as “philosopher’s hands,” and then with Steiner’s own hands. Hands and fingers do not reveal primarily past karma (as the head does) but karma-in-the-stream-of-becoming. If you contemplate Deleuze’s fingers, what would you experience? He had to let his fingernails grow very long because he couldn’t stand the physical sense of touch with his fingers; it was for him too painful! What do the fingers experience, deeply, unconsciously, when they touch? They sense our becoming, and they also experience constantly the fire that burns at the end-of-our-becoming, the so called second or soul death. In other words, the fingers live and move and become, all the time, *beyond the threshold*, where our spiritual stream of karma weaves and shapes our present life out of future lives.

The leading Dominicans knew that true freedom is indeed only temporarily impossible; they have labored hard to prepare its seed through their loyal and faithful devotion to Michael’s future impulse. And this seed can now begin to take root and sprout from the earth upward in the beginning of the second Michaelic century.

All alone, Steiner pioneered this individual deed through his sacrifice and toil for humanity. We are invited to be as beginners, as he was when he conceived and wrote this humble book, *The Philosophy of Freedom*, the seed for the spiritualization of thinking, consciousness, and humanity and the earth in the future.

He made it possible. And even despite the fact that not his but Heidegger’s concept of the human triumphed over Europe and the whole globe, Steiner’s deed made it possible that, in the historical moment in which “free-

dom [lighted] up in the human being for a single cosmic moment,” freedom will not be lost. That, in face of the fiercest evil of annihilation, brought about by so many “commanders of nothingness” all over the earth in the course of the 20th century, “...in the very same moment the human being would” *not any longer* “dissolve away...” And therefore, indeed: “We are here pointing to the abyss of nothingness in human evolution which man must cross when he becomes a free being. It is the working of Michael and the Christ-impulse which makes it possible for him to leap across the gulf.”

Though on the much-hoped-for large scale this battle didn't take place at the end of the 20th century, I wanted

to tell you that it still may become a fruitful and joyful seed of new life in each of our hearts. This was the sole purpose of my sharing tonight, “to make philosophy worthy of this event.” I wanted to inscribe it here in my first working visit to France, Colmar, Alsace: to share with you some of my experiences in the last decades of the last century, in order to encourage you, too, to begin and become beginners of the now beginning, new Michaelic century.

This fall and winter, along with a new book *The Spiritual Event of the 21st Century*, and a new website, Dr. Ben-Aharon will give talks and workshops across North America. Individuals or groups interested in hosting an event can contact the editor ([editor@anthroposophy.org](mailto:editor@anthroposophy.org)).