

IN THIS SECTION:

Rudolf Steiner's work is now so widely available that it seems unnecessary to publish his lectures and essays here. This piece on Goethe's spirituality, however, is unusually important and has never been available in English in an ideal form. In addition, the translator is Frederick Amrine who provides an introduction and fine notes. And this essay allows us to feature briefly the rather miraculous project at Threelfold Educational Center in Chestnut Ridge, NY, which has brought four conferences around Steiner's mystery dramas and will bring all of them in one festival next year. Finally we have David Adams' report of an extraordinary arts conference from 2012, which he describes as "probably the most inspiring, stimulating, and innovative anthroposophical event" he has experienced over forty years. Our cover image comes from this conference.

Goethe's Spirituality as Revealed in *The Fairy Tale of the Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily*

by Rudolf Steiner, translated by Frederick Amrine

Translator's Note

Over the coming year, the Anthroposophical Society will be sponsoring numerous initiatives related to Rudolf Steiner's four Mystery Dramas (1910-1913).¹ The following essay, published by Rudolf Steiner originally in 1899, is an important text both for the study of Steiner's dramas, and within the historical development of anthroposophy generally. Aside from a few pages of his autobiography, and despite their great importance, this essay is the only place where Steiner discusses either Schiller's essay or Goethe's *Fairy Tale* systematically. The sole extant translation into English, a valiant but flawed effort, has been out of print since 1925: hence this substantial revision, which is effectively new.²

The first version of the essay was published originally in Steiner's own journal, the *Magazine for Literature*, to commemorate Goethe's 150th birthday on August 28, 1899, under the title "Goethe's Secret Revelation." This early version has been reprinted in volume 30 of the German *Gesamtausgabe* (*Complete Works*), which remains untranslated.³ Then in 1918, Steiner rewrote it as translated here for inclusion in a volume called *Goethe's Spirituality as Revealed by Faust and The Fairy Tale of the Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily*. This little book consists of three essays, two on *Faust* followed by the present essay on Schiller and Goethe. The long first essay, "Goethe's *Faust* as an Image of his Esoteric Worldview," had first been published as a booklet in 1902; the second, "Goethe's Spirituality as Revealed in *Faust*," was newly composed for the volume in 1918. (This second essay is very short but genuinely profound; I consider it a milestone in the history of scholarship on Goethe.) In 1956, the 6th edition of the German original was incorporated into *Gesamtausgabe* (*Complete Edition*) of Steiner's works as GA 22. My fully revised translation of this volume with introduction and commentary is forthcoming from SteinerBooks as CW 22—an excellent opportunity for some individual or group to attain some measure of immortality by subsidizing the publication, with appropriate recognition in the published volume!

The original version of this essay (1899) seems to have been Rudolf Steiner's first esoteric publication, and a lecture with the same title was likely the first openly esoteric talk that Steiner ever gave. At the end of Ch. 29 of his autobiography (CW 28), Steiner communicates his resolve to begin speaking openly about his spiritual insights, and then he immediately begins Ch. 30 with an account of his writing and publication of this essay. He proceeds on the following page to describe how a talk with the same title came to be his first esoteric lecture within the circle of Theosophists surrounding the Count and Countess Brockdorff in Berlin. Earlier in the same book (Ch. 12), Steiner describes at some length how important both *The Fairy Tale* and Schiller's essay had been to him during his time in Weimar while editing Goethe's scientific writings. He asserts that Goethe's tale brings the reader right up to the very threshold of direct spiritual experience.

As Steiner himself notes in the following essay, Goethe's *Fairy Tale* was the main inspiration for his

¹ See GA 14, Rudolf Steiner, *Four Mystery Dramas*, trans. Ruth and Hans Pusch (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks/Anthroposophic Press, 2007); also *The Four Mystery Plays*, trans. Adam Bittleston (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1982).

² *Goethe's Standard of the Soul*, trans. D. S. Osmond (Anthroposophic Press/Anthroposophical Publishing Co.).

³ *Methodische Grundlagen der Anthroposophie 1804-1901: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Philosophie, Naturwissenschaft, Ästhetik und Seelenkunde*, 3rd edn. (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1989), pp. 86-99.

own first Mystery Drama. As this is both widely known (the Pusch translation even includes a table of correspondences on p. 12) and too large a topic for the space available, my notes in the translation make no reference to the Mystery Dramas. But they do refer at several key points to parallels with Freudian and Jungian depth psychology, which Steiner anticipates here. Even these few allusions to the conceptual language of then-nascent depth psychology help greatly, I think, to explain Steiner's profound fascination with a text that most Goethe-scholars would consider marginal and uncharacteristic. (Steiner's interest in Schiller's magnificent essay needs no explanation.) But it was only in the last year of his life, in his lecture of 8 July 1924 (GA 237, vol. III of *Karmic Relationships*), that Steiner revealed the profoundest reasons for his interest in Goethe's *Fairy Tale*—revelations that touch us all as anthroposophists in the most intimate way imaginable.

F.A.

The Essay

¶1 Around the time of the beginning of his friendship with Goethe, Schiller was occupying himself with the ideas that found expression in his essay *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*.¹ In 1794, he elaborated a set of letters,² which he had originally written to the Duke of Augustenburg, for *The Horae*.³ The train of thought in the verbal discussions and the correspondence which took

place at that time between Goethe and Schiller returned again and again to the nexus of ideas contained in these letters. Schiller's meditations⁴ were directed to the question: What condition of the human faculties is most conducive to human dignity in the best sense of that word? "Every individual human being, one may say, carries within him, potentially and prescriptively, an ideal man, the archetype of a human being, and it is his life's task to be, for all his changing manifestations, in harmony with the unchanging unity of this ideal."* [*Thus writes Schiller in the fourth letter.]⁵ Schiller aims to build a bridge from human nature as it exists in everyday reality to human nature as an ideal. Two drives⁶ exist within human nature, which hold it back from ideal perfection when they develop in an unbalanced way – the drives of the *senses* and of *reason*. If the sense-drive has the upper hand, we become the servant of our instincts and passions. A force that darkens⁷ our consciousness casts a shadow upon the actions that we perform in light of that consciousness. [65/66] Our acts become the result of an inner necessity. If the rational drive predominates, we strive to suppress the instincts and passions and to give ourselves over to an abstract necessity that is not sustained by inner warmth. In both cases we are subject to coercion. In the former, our sensory nature subdues the spiritual; in the latter, our spiritual nature subdues that of the senses. Neither leaves us completely free in the kernel of our being, which lies between the material and the spiritual. Complete freedom can be realized only by harmonizing both drives. Our sensory nature must not be subdued, but rather ennobled; our instincts and passions must be permeated with spirituality in such a way that they themselves become the realizers⁸ of the spiritual element that has entered into them. And reason must take hold of the human soul in such a way that it usurps the power of mere instincts and passions; then we shall fulfill the counsels of reason as though with a natural instinct and the power of passion. "When we embrace with passion someone who deserves our contempt, we are painfully aware of the *compulsion of nature*. When we feel hostile towards another who compels our esteem, we are painfully aware of the

1 Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), the dramatist who became one of Goethe's closest friends and collaborators. Schiller was also a lyric poet and a historian, but Rudolf Steiner, like several of Schiller's contemporaries, considered him a great philosopher above all. Steiner was influenced deeply by Schiller's essay *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* (1794). A fine English translation by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby, with facing German and extensive commentary, was published by Oxford UP in 1967 (rpt. in paperback since), and it has helped bring this neglected masterpiece some measure of the attention it deserves. Another edition published originally by Yale University Press and now reprinted by Dover as an inexpensive paperback is much inferior as a translation, lacks the German original facing the English, and is marred by Reginald Snell's superficial yet condescending introduction. For a fuller treatment of Schiller's essay in relation to Steiner and within its own intellectual-historical context, see Frederick Amrine's essay "From Schiller to Steiner," forthcoming in the next issue of the Research Bulletin of the Research Institute for Waldorf Education.

2 The final version is highly unusual, if not unique: an "epistolary philosophical treatise." It has the density and deeply organic form of lyric poetry, and Schiller is also a master of rhetoric, which allows otherwise abstract arguments to speak directly to our feeling and will.

3 *Die Horae* was an elite literary journal edited by Schiller. Although it lasted only two years, it attracted the finest writers of the day and was highly influential. The Duke of Augustenburg was Schiller's refined, enlightened, and politically liberal patron.

4 *Nachsinnen*

5 All direct quotes from Schiller's text will be taken from Wilkinson and Willoughby's translation, despite their unfortunate use of gendered language.

6 *Triebe*, the same term that Freud would later employ in psychoanalysis.

7 *trüben*, the same verb that Goethe employs in his color theory to signify anything that is opaque and darkens light.

8 *Verwirklicher*

compulsion of reason.⁹ But once he has at the same time engaged our affection and won our esteem, then both the compulsion of feeling and the compulsion of reason disappear and we begin to love him...”* [*Fourteenth letter.] A person whose sensory nature manifests the spirituality of reason, and whose reason manifests the elemental power of passion, would be a *free individuality*.¹⁰ [66/67] Schiller wants to found harmonious community within society upon the development of free individualities. For him the problem of creating a genuinely humane existence was bound up with questions about the creation of social forms. This was his answer to the questions posed to humanity by the French Revolution at the time when he expressed these thoughts.* [*Twenty-seventh letter.]

¶2 Goethe found deep satisfaction in such ideas. On 26 October 1794 he wrote to Schiller on the subject of *The Aesthetic Education* as follows: “I read the manuscript you sent me immediately and with great pleasure; I swallowed it in one gulp. Like a delicious drink that suits our nature and just wants to be imbibed and shows its healthy effects on our tongue through a pleasant humor of the nervous system – that’s how pleasant and salubrious these letters seemed to me. And how could it be otherwise, since I found such a coherent and noble exposition of what I have long recognized to be true, in part having already lived it, and in part desiring to live it?”

¶3 Goethe found that Schiller’s *Aesthetic Education* expressed all that he longed to experience in life in order to become conscious of an existence that should be really worthy of our humanity. It is therefore comprehensible that in his soul also, thoughts should be stimulated which he tried in his own way to elaborate along the same lines as Schiller’s. These thoughts gave birth to the literary work that has been interpreted in so many different ways, — namely the enigmatic fairy tale¹¹ at the end of the narrative which appeared in *The Horae* under the title *Conversations of German Refugees*.¹² *The Fairy Tale* appeared in this journal in the year 1795. These conversations, like

Schiller’s *Aesthetic Education*, refer to events unfolding in the French Revolution. This concluding fairy tale cannot be explained by bringing all sorts of ideas to bear upon it from outside, but rather only by going back to the conceptions¹³ that lived in Goethe’s soul at that time.

¶4 Most of the attempts to interpret this literary work are recounted in the book entitled *Goethe’s Art Tales* by Friedrich Meyer von Waldeck.* [*Heidelberg: Karl Wintersche Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1879.] Since the publication of this book a few new attempts at interpretation have emerged of course as well.* [*I have tried to enter into the spirit of *The Fairy Tale* by taking as my starting point Goethe’s worldview as it had developed at the beginning of the 1790s. The results of my research were first presented in a lecture that I gave to the Vienna Goethe Society on 27 November 1891. What I said at that time has since expanded in many different dimensions. But everything that I have said or published since regarding *The Fairy Tale* is only an extension of the thoughts contained in that lecture. My Mystery Drama that appeared in 1910, *The Portal of Initiation*, is also the fruit of those thoughts.]

¶5 We must look for the embryonic thought underlying *The Fairy Tale* in the *Conversations of German Refugees*, which end with *The Fairy Tale*. In the [framing narrative], Goethe tells of the escape of a certain family from regions devastated by war. [68/69] In the conversations between the members of this family, everything comes to life that was stimulated in Goethe’s thinking¹⁴ by his exchange of ideas with Schiller along the lines characterized above. The conversations revolve around two intellectual foci.¹⁵ One of them governs those conceptions of human nature which allow us to believe in the existence of some connection between the events of our lives – a connection that is impermeable to the laws of material actuality. The stories told in this connection are in part pure ghost stories, and in part they describe experiences which seem to reveal a “miraculous” element that takes the place of natural law. Of course Goethe did not write these narratives out of any kind of a tendency towards superstition, but rather out of a much deeper motivation. That soothing, mystical feeling¹⁶ which many people have when they are able to hear about something that “cannot be explained” by a rationality that is “limited” and attends

9 Schiller means that in each case we can come to feel the irony of our inappropriate response, which confirms the reality of these drives within human nature.

10 This had been of course the great ideal of Steiner’s own book *The Philosophy of Freedom*, published five years earlier, which was deeply influenced by Schiller’s essay.

11 *Rätselmärchen*

12 The standard English translation is vol. 10 of the Suhrkamp/Princeton edition of Goethe’s *Collected Works*, but a less expensive paperback has been published more recently: *The German Refugees*, trans. Mike Mitchell (Dedalus, 2006).

13 *Vorstellungen*

14 *Vorstellungskreisen*

15 *Gedankenmittelpunkte*

16 *angenehm-mystische Empfindung*

only to lawful connections was quite alien to Goethe. But again and again he found himself confronted by the question: Isn't it possible for the human soul to emancipate itself from conceptions emanating solely from sensory perception and to grasp a supersensory world through a purely spiritual intuition?¹⁷ The drive towards this kind of cognitive activity might very well be a natural human striving based on a connection with such a supersensory world – a connection that is hidden from the senses and the understanding¹⁸ that is bound to them. And the inclination towards experiences which appear to burst the natural order of things might be only a childish aberration of this justified human longing for a spiritual world. [69/70] Goethe was interested in the peculiar direction of the soul's activity when giving way to this fondness for the sweets of superstition rather than the actual content of the tales and stories to which these tendencies give birth in unsophisticated minds.

¶6 From the second intellectual *focus*¹⁹ radiate concepts and images²⁰ touching our moral life. The stimulus for these concepts and images is derived not from material existence, but from impulses that raise us above the impulses stimulated by our sensory existence. Within this realm a supersensory world of forces²¹ enters into the life of the human soul.

¶7 Vectors which must ultimately end in the supersensible radiate out from both these intellectual *foci*. And they give rise to the question of our innermost human nature, the connection of the human soul with the world of the senses on the one side and with the supersensory realm on the other. Schiller approached this question philosophically in his treatise, but the abstract philosophical path was not Goethe's. Goethe had to incorporate his thinking along such lines into a series of *images*. And this was accomplished through *The Fairy Tale of The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily*. In Goethe's imagination the various faculties of the human soul assumed the form of characters in *The Fairy Tale*, and the whole life and striving of the human soul was imagined²² as the experiences and interactions of these characters. – Now as soon as anything of this kind is said one has to be prepared for the objection which will come from certain quarters that

in this way a composition is lifted out of the realm of imagination, [70/71] of fantasy, and made into an inartistic schema²³ of abstract concepts; the figures are removed from real life and transformed into symbols or even allegories that are not of the nature of art. Such an objection is based on the notion²⁴ that nothing but abstract ideas can live in the human soul as soon as it leaves the realm of the senses. It fails to recognize that there is a living, *supersensory* mode of perception just as there is a sensory one. And in *The Fairy Tale*, Goethe moves with his figures in the realm of supersensory perceptions, not in that of abstract concepts.²⁵ My argument is not meant to imply in any way that these figures and their experiences can be reduced to this or that specific *meaning*. Allegorical²⁶ interpretation of that kind is as far removed as it could possibly be from the standpoint of this essay, which sees the old Man with the Lamp and the Will-o'-Wisps in *The Fairy Tale* as nothing more nor less than the imaginative figures that appear in the work of art. What must be sought, however, are the particular thought-impulses that stimulated the imagination of the poet to create such figures. Goethe's consciousness surely did not lay hold of these thought-impulses in abstract form.²⁷ He expressed himself in imaginative figures because to his

23 *Verbildlichung*

24 *Vorstellung*. See the foregoing note. Here the Goethean sense of *Vorstellung* as a paradigmatic assumption is very strong.

25 In the same way, Jung would later personify and give names to the various real forces of the soul encountered through introspection. Indeed, according to Anthony Storr, "Jung encouraged his patients to conduct dialogues with these 'figures from the unconscious' as if they were real people in the external world" [*Jung* (Fontana/Collins, 1973), p. 13].

26 *symbolische Ausdeutung*, literally "symbolic interpretation." Steiner often uses the term "symbol" to describe representations that would be better described as allegorical. It was Goethe who first drew this important distinction, and Goethe would have described both his own tale and Steiner's interpretation of it as "symbolic," while joining Steiner in rejecting any attempt to interpret it as an allegory.

27 It is telling here that Steiner describes Goethe's unconscious motives as "thought-impulses," which implies objectivity and universality. Many years later, Jung would begin his seminal essay on the "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious" by distinguishing between "the personal unconscious" and "a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn... the collective unconscious" [C.G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (Princeton UP, 1959), p. 3]. He goes on to describe in some detail three of those archetypes: the shadow, the anima, and the old man – all of which figure prominently in Goethe's *Fairy Tale*. In 1899, Steiner was a year ahead of Freud and decades ahead of Jung, but for that reason he did not have available to him the vocabulary and conceptual apparatus of depth psychology. Instead, Steiner delivered the early version of his own spiritual psychology – tragically, perhaps – in the idiom of Theosophy.

17 *in einem rein geistigen Anschauen*

18 *Verstand*

19 *Gedankenmittelpunkt*

20 *Vorstellungen*

21 *Kräftewelt*

22 *sich verbildlichen*

genius any abstract form of thought would have been too lacking in content.²⁸ The latent thoughts²⁹ holding sway in the substrata of Goethe's soul bore fruit as the imaginative figure. Thought, as the intermediate stage, lives only subconsciously in his soul and gives the imagination its direction.³⁰ The reader of Goethe's *Fairy Tale* needs the thought content, for that alone can attune one's soul such that it can resonate with Goethe's creative fantasy in re-creative imagination. [71/72] Entering empathetically into the content of this thought allows us to develop organs enabling us to live in the atmosphere that Goethe breathed spiritually when he created *The Fairy Tale*. This means that we focus our gaze upon the same psychological realities³¹ as Goethe; it was those powers of the soul, and not philosophical ideas, which caused these living, spiritual forms to burst forth before him.³² What is living in these spiritual forms is what lives within the human soul.

¶8 The way of thinking³³ that permeates *The Fairy Tale* is already present in the *Conversations of German Refugees*. In the conversations narrated there, the human soul turns toward each of the two aspects of the world between which human life is placed, the sensory and the supersensory. Our deeper, inner nature strives to establish the right relationship to both these spheres for the purposes of attaining a state of soul that is free and worthy of our humanity, and of fashioning a harmonious relationship to our fellow human beings. Goethe felt that what he brought to light about our relationship as human beings to both these aspects of the world in the embedded tales did not come to expression fully in the framing narrative of the *Conversations of German Refugees*. In the

all-embracing picture of *The Fairy Tale* he had to bring those enigmas of the human soul, upon which his gaze was directed, nearer to the immeasurably rich world of spiritual life. The striving towards a condition truly worthy of our humanity, to which Schiller refers and which Goethe longs to experience, is represented by the Youth in *The Fairy Tale*. His marriage to the fair Lily, who embodies the realization of the world of Freedom, is the union with those forces which slumber within the human soul³⁴ and when awakened lead to a genuine inner experience of the free individuality. [72/73]

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¶9 The old Man with the Lamp plays an important part in the unfolding of the plot of *The Fairy Tale*. When he comes with his lamp into the clefts of the rocks, he is asked which is the most important of the secrets he knows. He answers, "the open one," and when asked whether he will divulge this secret, replies, "When I know the fourth." This fourth secret, however, is known by the green Snake, who whispers it in the old Man's ear. There can be no doubt that this secret concerns the condition for which all the figures in *The Fairy Tale* are longing. This condition is described at the end of the tale. The conclusion depicts in pictorial form the way in which the human soul enters into union with the subterranean forces of its nature.³⁵ As a result of this, the soul's relationship to the supersensory realm (Lily's kingdom) and to the realm of the senses (the kingdom of the green Snake), is attuned in such a way that in experience and in action it is freely receptive to impulses from both regions.³⁶ In union with both, the soul is able to realize its true being.³⁷ We have to assume that the old Man knows this secret, for he is the only figure who is always master of the circumstances; everything is dependent on his guidance and leadership. What is it that the green Snake can say to the old Man then? He knows that the Snake must offer herself up in sacrifice if the longed-for goal is to be attained. However, it is not *his knowledge* that will ultimately decide the matter. [73/74] He has to wait with this knowledge until the Snake has matured sufficiently that

28 *inhaltsarm*

29 *Gedankenimpuls*. Cf. Freud's key term *Traumgedanke*, the "dream thought" or "latent dream," first introduced in ch. 4 of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900).

30 This passage reveals that in 1899 Steiner was already working towards the distinction between "latent" thoughts and "manifest" images that would prove central to Freud's account of the unconscious. Translating into Freudian terms, Steiner interprets Goethe's *Fairy Tale* as a "manifest dream" that simultaneously reveals and distorts an esoteric reality beyond the threshold of consciousness. Steiner's account of the contexts within which the "dream" of the *Tale* arose (the French Revolution, Schiller's essay) would be the complex of the "patient's" associations that the analyst uses to unlock the latent meaning.

31 *menschliche Seelenwelt*

32 Another succinct and prescient anticipation of depth psychology. Freud and Jung could not have expressed this central concept in their thought more eloquently themselves.

33 *Vorstellungsart*

34 A clear echo of the opening sentence of *How to Know Higher Worlds* (CW 10).

35 The subterranean Temple with its symmetries and four compass points is remarkably similar to the mandorla-like images Jung used to describe the outcome of individuation (see below).

36 See especially the extraordinary descriptions of such actively achieved indeterminateness in Schiller's twenty-first letter.

37 In the same letter, Schiller goes so far as to claim that because we are fully human only when we achieve this state of aesthetic inner harmony, Beauty gives us our humanity anew each day.

it can resolve to sacrifice itself. – Within the compass of the life of our soul dwells a power that carries the soul's development through to the condition of free individuality. This power has its task *on the way* to the attainment of this condition.³⁸ If this condition were to be achieved, this power would lose its meaning. This power brings the human soul into connection with the experiences of life. It transforms all that science and life reveal into an inner wisdom for life. It makes the soul ever riper to achieve its desired spiritual goal. Once the goal is attained, this power loses its meaning, for it establishes our relationship to the external world. Having attained the goal, however, all our external impulses will have been changed into inner promptings of the soul. Then this power must sacrifice itself; it must suspend its functions; it must, without separate existence of its own, live on now in the transformed human being as the ferment permeating the other aspects of the soul's life. Goethe's spiritual eye was especially focused upon this power in human life. He saw it at work in the experiences of life and of science. Goethe wanted to see it employed freely, without any preconceived ideas or theories about an abstract goal. He wanted the goal to emerge out of the experiences themselves. When the experiences are mature they must give birth to the goal themselves. They must not be stunted by a predetermined end. This faculty of the soul is personified in the green Snake. She devours the gold – the wisdom derived from life and science, which must be incorporated into the soul so that wisdom and soul become *one*. This faculty of the soul will be sacrificed at the right time; it will bring us to our goal, will make us into free individualities. [74/75] The Snake whispers to the old Man *that it will* sacrifice itself. In doing so, it speaks a secret that is open to him, but of which he can make no use so long as it is not realized by the free resolve of the Snake. When this faculty of our soul speaks to us as the green Snake speaks to the old Man, then “the time *is at hand*” for the soul to perceive life-experience as life-wisdom that establishes harmony between the sensory and the supersensory realms.

¶10 The Youth has had premature contact with the supersensory world – with the fair Lily – and he has been paralyzed, deadened. Life revives in him and he marries the fair Lily when the Snake – the soul's life experience – is offered up in sacrifice. Thus the longed-for consummation is attained. The time has now also come when the soul

38 Jung would later speak of a “self-regulating principle” within the mind that leads it up to the beginning of the “esoteric process” of individuation, which is “the central concept of his psychology” [Storr, 81].

is able to build a bridge between the realms on this side and on the other side of the river. This bridge is built of the Snake's own substance. From now on, life-experience has no separate existence; it is no longer directed merely to the outer sensory world as before. It has become an inner power of the soul which is not exercised consciously as such, but which functions only when the sensory and supersensory aspects of our inner human nature warm and illuminate each other reciprocally.³⁹ – This inner state is brought about by the Snake, but the green Snake by itself cannot impart to the Youth the gifts whereby he is able to control the newly founded kingdom of the soul. These gifts are bestowed upon him by the three Kings. From the brazen King he receives the sword with the command: “The sword on left, the right free.” The silver King gives him the scepter with the words: “Feed the sheep.” [75/76] The golden King sets the oaken garland on his head, saying, “Understand what is highest.”⁴⁰ The fourth King, who is formed of a mixture of the three metals, copper, silver and gold, collapses into a formless clump.⁴¹ – While on the path towards the development of a free individuality, three faculties of the soul form a single alloy: will (copper), feeling (silver), and thinking⁴² (gold). Over the course of a lifetime, experience reveals to the soul everything that it will assimilate through the operation of these three forces. Power, through which virtue works,⁴³

39 Here Steiner is referring to a key concept in Schiller's treatise that Schiller had borrowed from Fichte: the “reciprocal interaction” of two different faculties which mutually limit and thereby transform each other. (Imagine multiplying a fraction by its reciprocal: the result is always 1, i.e., unity.) Schiller boldly extends this epistemological concept into the realms of art and even politics; indeed, art holds out the promise of a genuinely revolutionary politics because it can heal our inner imbalances in this way, and make us adequate vessels to embody an ideal state that adequately reflects the humane ideals of human nature itself. Fichte and Schiller present in a philosophical guise archetypal images of integration that appear more directly in alchemy (the marriage of the King and Queen) or in works of art (e.g., the trials of fire and water at the end of Mozart's *Magic Flute*). Goethe's *Fairy Tale* also presents these archetypal images in a more immediately imaginative form.

40 Goethe's triadic imagery here is a direct parallel with the many philosophical and psychological triads in Schiller's essay, but it also parallels the triple ideals of the French Revolution (*liberté, égalité, fraternité*), and of course it anticipates Steiner's own later idea of an ideal “threefold social order” created in the image of threefold human psychology (thinking, feeling, willing) and physiology (nervous system, rhythmic systems, metabolism).

41 Here Goethe's *Tale* clearly alludes to Nebuchadnezzar's dream in *Daniel 2*.

42 *Erkenntnis*, literally “knowledge” or “cognition;” changed so as to conform to the more familiar triad of psychological faculties that is omnipresent in Steiner's later writings and lectures on spiritual psychology.

43 *die Macht, durch welche die Tugend wirkt*: the German original is inherently ambiguous, and might also be translated “The power through which virtue

is revealed to the will; Beauty (beautiful appearance) reveals itself to feeling; Wisdom reveals itself to thinking. As human beings we are separated from the state of “free individuality” by the fact that these three forces work in our soul in alloy; we shall attain free individuality to the degree that we assimilate the gifts, each of the three separately with its unique qualities,⁴⁴ in full consciousness, and unite them in our souls *ourselves* – in free, conscious activity. Then the chaotic alloy of the gifts of Will, Feeling and Thinking that had previously compelled us collapses under its own weight.

¶11 The king of Wisdom is golden. Whenever gold appears in *The Fairy Tale*, it embodies some form of Wisdom. The operation of Wisdom in the life-experience that is finally sacrificed has already been described. But the Will-o’-Wisps also seize upon the Gold in their own way. We bear within our souls a capacity (in many people it develops abnormally and seems to fill their whole being) by which we are able to assimilate all the wisdom that life and science bestow. [76/77] But this capacity in our souls does not endeavor to unite wisdom completely with the inner life. It remains one-sided knowledge, as an instrument of dogma or criticism; it makes a person appear brilliant, or helps to give her a one-sided prominence in life. It makes no effort to achieve a balance by integrating experience of the outer world into the soul. It becomes the kind of superstition as described by Goethe in his *Conversations of German Refugees*, because it does not try to harmonize itself with that which is natural.⁴⁵ It becomes an ideology before it has become life within the soul.⁴⁶ It is what sustains the lives of false prophets and sophists. It makes no effort to assimilate Goethe’s wise maxim: “We must surrender our existence if we want to exist.” The green Snake, the selfless life-experience that has developed for love’s sake to conscious wisdom,⁴⁷ surrenders its existence in order to build the bridge between sensuality and spirituality.

¶12 An irresistible desire pushes the Youth onward to the kingdom of the fair Lily. What are the characteristics of this kingdom? Although human beings have the deepest longing for the world of the fair Lily, they can reach

it only at certain times before the bridge is built. At noon the Snake, even before its sacrifice, builds a temporary bridge to the supersensory world. And in the evening and morning they can pass over the river that separates sensory existence from supersensory existence on the Giant’s shadow – the powers of representation⁴⁸ and of memory. [77/78] Anyone who approaches the Mistress of the supersensory world without the necessary inner preparation⁴⁹ will suffer harm to his life like the Youth. Lily also desires the other region. The Ferryman who conveyed the Will-o’-Wisps over the river can bring anyone back from the supersensory world, but he can take no one to it.

¶13 Anyone who longs to be touched by the supersensory world needs first to have begun orienting her soul towards⁵⁰ that world through life experience, for the supersensory world can be grasped only in free spiritual activity. Goethe expresses his own conviction that this is so when he writes in his *Prose Aphorisms*: “Everything that sets our spirit free without giving us mastery over ourselves is detrimental.” Another of his aphorisms runs: “Duty is love for the commands that we give to ourselves.” The kingdom of unbalanced supersensory activity – Schiller’s “form drive” – is that of the fair Lily; the kingdom of unbalanced sensuality – Schiller’s “sense drive” – is the home of the Snake before its sacrifice. – The Ferryman can transport anyone into the latter realm, *but* he cannot convey them into the former. All of us have descended involuntarily from the supersensory world. But we can re-establish a free union with this spiritual world only when we have the will to pass over the bridge of sacrificed life-experience. It is a union independent of any “time,” of all merely passive inner states. Before this free union has taken place there exist two involuntary conditions of soul which enable us to attain to the supersensory world, which is *one with* the kingdom of the free individuality. One such condition is present in creative imagination or fantasy which is a reflection of supersensory experience. Through art we can join the sensory and the supersensory. In art this condition⁵¹ manifests also as freely creative soul. This aspect is depicted in the crossing which the green Snake, who typifies life-experience that is not yet ready for supersensory existence, makes possible at noon. The other inner state arises when our level of consciousness – like the Giant’s, who is an image of the macrocosm

works is revealed. . .”

44 in ihrer besonderen Eigenart

45 das Naturgemäße

46 Cf. Steiner’s gnomic formulation at the end of the “Preface” to his *Philosophy of Freedom*: “One must be able to confront an idea and experience it; otherwise, one will fall into its bondage.”

47 erlebte Weisheit, literally “experienced wisdom”

48 Vorstellung

49 Eignung

50 an dieses Übersinnliche. . . herangearbeitet

51 reading *er* as referring back to *der Zustand*

within us – is dimmed, when conscious cognition is obscured and lamed in such a way that it plays itself out as superstition, hallucination, mediumistic trance. Goethe sees the faculty of the soul that manifests itself in this way in consciousness that has been dimmed down as one with that power which is prone to lead men to freedom in a revolutionary way, through force and despotism. In revolutions the urge for an ideal state manifests itself obscurely; it is like the shadow of the Giant which lies over the river at twilight. Schiller's letter to Goethe of 16 October 1795 provides strong evidence that *this* interpretation of the Giant is also justified. Goethe was traveling, and he wanted to extend his journey as far as Frankfurt am Main. Schiller writes: "I am indeed glad to know that you are still far away from the commotion along the Main [River]. The shadow of the giant might rough you up a bit." The results of caprice, of the unregulated *laissez faire* of historical events, is personified in the Giant and his shadow in conjunction with the dimming of human consciousness. The impulses within the soul that lead to such events are certainly associated with the tendency towards superstition and chimerical ideology. [79/80]

¶14 The old Man's lamp has the quality of being able to give light only where there is already another light. One cannot help being reminded here of the saying of an "old mystic," quoted by Goethe: "If the eye were not sun-like, / Never could it see the sun; / If God's own power lay not within us, / How could Divinity delight us?"⁵² Just as the lamp does not give light in the darkness, so the light of wisdom, of knowledge, does not shine in those who do not bring to it the appropriate organ, the inner light. What the lamp denotes will become even more intelligible if we take heed of the fact that in its own way it can shed light upon what is developing as a resolve within the Snake, but that there must first be knowledge of the Snake's willingness to make this resolution. There is a kind of human knowledge which is at all times a concern of the highest human striving. It has arisen from the inner experience of souls in the course of the historical life of humanity. But the goal of human striving to which it points can be attained in concrete reality only by way of sacrificed life-experience. All that the consideration of the historical past teaches us, all that mystical and religious experience enables us to say about our connection with the supersensible world – all this can find its ultimate

consummation only through the sacrifice of life-experience. The old Man can transform everything with his lamp in such a way that it assumes a new, life-promoting form, but real inner development depends on the ripening of life-experience. [80/81]

¶15 The wife of the old Man is the character whose own body is pledged to the River for the debt that she has come to owe it. This woman personifies the human powers of perception and ideation⁵³ as well as humanity's memory of its past. She accompanies the old Man. With her help he has possession of the light that is able to illumine what has already come to light within external reality. But the powers of ideation and memory are not united in life with the concrete forces active in the evolution of the individual human being and in the historical life of humanity. The faculties of ideation and of memory cleave to the past; they conserve the things of the past so that they can promote all that is becoming and evolving in the present.⁵⁴ The conditions maintained by memory, within which the individual and the human race are always living, are the precipitates of this power of the soul. Schiller writes of them in the third letter of *The Aesthetic Education*: "the force of his [the human being's] needs threw him into this situation before he was as yet capable of exercising his freedom to choose it; compulsion organized it according to purely natural laws before *he* could do so according to the laws of Reason." The river divides the two kingdoms, those of free spiritual activity in supersensible existence and of necessity in sensory life. The unconscious powers of the soul – the Ferryman – transport us, as humans who originate in the supersensory world, into the world of the senses. Here we find ourselves initially in a realm where the powers of ideation and memory have created the conditions within which we must live. But they separate us from the supersensory world; we feel ourselves beholden to them when we must approach the power (the Ferryman) that has brought us unconsciously out of the supersensory world into the world of the senses. [81/82] We can break the power that these conditions have over us, and which is revealed in the deprivation of our freedom, only when we free ourselves through "the fruits of the earth" – that is to say, through self-created life-wisdom – from the obligation, from the coercion imposed upon us by those conditions. If we cannot do this, these conditions – the water of the river – take our individual

52 The "old mystic" whom Goethe paraphrases is the ancient neo-Platonic philosopher Plotinus (204-270 CE).

53 *Vorstellung*

54 *das Entstehende und Werdende*

wisdom away from us. Our inner life simply disappears.

¶16 Upon the river is erected the Temple in which the marriage between the Youth and the fair Lily is consummated. The “marriage” with the supersensory realm, the realization of the free individuality, is possible in a human soul whose forces have been given a new structure that represents a transformation of their normal configuration. The life-experience previously acquired by the soul has matured to such a degree that the force brought to bear upon it is no longer exhausted in adapting to the world of the senses. This force becomes the content of what is able to stream into our inner nature from the supersensory world; then our actions in the material world become the executors of spiritual promptings. In this condition of soul, those human faculties which had previously flowed along false or one-sided channels gain a new significance that accords with a new, higher consciousness within the personality as a whole. The wisdom of the Will-o’-Wisps, for example, which has broken free of the world of the senses and has wandered into superstition or chaotic thought, serves to open the door of the “Sanctuary”⁵⁵ [82/83] that is the symbol of the inner state wherein the chaotic alloy of will, feeling and thinking⁵⁶ holds us in bondage within a constrained⁵⁷ inner life shut off from the supersensory world.

¶17 In the fairy-tale images of this literary work we have discussed we can see how the evolution of the human soul presented itself to Goethe’s inner eye.⁵⁸ It is an evolution that begins with a mentality that feels estranged from the supersensory world until it attains those heights of consciousness where life in the realm of the senses is permeated by the supersensory realm of the spirit to such an extent that the two become *one*. This process of transformation was visible to Goethe’s soul in delicately woven figures of fantasy. The problem of the relation of the physical world to a world of supersensory experience free of all sensory elements, with its consequences for the shaping of human society, is a thread that runs throughout the *Conversations of German Refugees*. This problem finds a comprehensive solution at the end of *The Fairy Tale* in the weaving of poetic images. This essay merely indicates the path leading to the realm where Goethe’s imagination wove the fabric of *The Fairy Tale*. Living un-

derstanding of all the other details can be developed by those who realize that *The Fairy Tale* is a picture of the life of the soul as it strives towards the supersensory world. Schiller realized this fully. He writes: “The fairy tale is full of color and humor and I think that you have given most charming expression to the ideas of which you once spoke, namely, in reference to the reciprocal interplay of the faculties and their reciprocal interactions.”⁵⁹ [83/84] For even if one were to object that this reciprocal interaction of the faculties refers to faculties of *several different* individuals, we can plead the well-known Goethean truth that although from one point of view the faculties of the soul are distributed among different human beings, they are nothing but the divergent rays of the collective human soul.⁶⁰ And when different human natures work together in community, we have in this mutual action and reaction nothing other than a picture of the multifarious faculties that, taken together, constitute a single, shared human nature.

⁵⁹ Schiller’s letter of 29 August 1795

⁶⁰ Jung’s later concept of the collective unconscious is clearly anticipated here.

⁵⁵ *Schloß*, literally “castle.” In the first encounter, this space is described ambiguously as a “vault,” a “Sanctuary” and a “Temple” (Carlyle’s translation).

⁵⁶ *Erkennen*, literally “knowing.” See the earlier note.

⁵⁷ *unfrei*, literally “unfree”

⁵⁸ *Geistesauge*

