

The Blue Star of Individuality

by C.T. Roszell

In the second scene of Rudolf Steiner's mystery drama *The Portal of Initiation*, the human individuality is evoked through the IMAGINATION of a sparkling star. Maria says to Johannes, "You will have to undergo all the trepidations which one bereft of their senses could have to face—so speaks your star." And in the following scene Benedictus encourages him with the following word, "My son, you have persevered this far—you will make it all the way through. I see your star shining full."

What is the meaning of the star spoken of here? Rudolf Steiner conveys the viewpoint of Benedictus in the lecture cycle *At the Gates of Spiritual Science* (GA 95), while delineating how the soul-spiritual configuration of a human being appears to the clairvoyant. In two lectures he treats two different aspects of the phenomenon. On August 22, 1906 in Stuttgart the astral sheath is portrayed as a form in constant movement except:



Rudolf Steiner, 1861-1925

... in one single small space, which is like an egg-shaped blue

sphere slightly extended at either end, just a little behind the brow at the root of the nose. This is only true of the astral form in humans. In more cultured individuals it is less noticeable; it is more prominent in people living in the wild. Actually, there isn't anything there; it is an empty space. Just as the interior of a flame, there where it is empty, appears blue due to the surrounding aura of light, so it is with the human astral aura. Light is cast into the dark empty space. That is the outward expression of the I.

In the lecture of August 24, 1906 Rudolf Steiner describes the phenomenon from a more inward point of view. He depicts the changes that moral, artistic and wisdom powers bring about in the sheaths:

The more ... that one works on oneself through the essential powers of the I, the more rays go out from the blue sphere, from the I center. These rays represent forces by which a person gains mastery over the astral body. Viewed this way, one can speak of two astral members—one member that remains bound to the instinctive realm, and another that one has made one's own.

Rudolf Steiner describes how, Imaginatively speaking, over time the blue-hued empty space is superseded by a shining star. The space is gradually transformed into a shining star, shooting through and ennobling the astral body. Until this transformation is completed, a person is, in a way, twins—and the two are not at all of one view in all things. There are two souls in one's heart, capable of going separate ways—both originating from out of the identical soul-spiritual blue. What does it mean? We want to harness all our resources to find out, and trace the consequences to their conclusion.

We can start with an artist's impressions, one capable of creating authentic high art—cohesive, true impressions that give form and expression to activity from beyond the bodily senses, brought into true relation to the sense world.

Lord Bulwer-Lytton and the Silver Spark

Lord Bulwer-Lytton was a nineteenth century English novelist, occultist and parliamentarian.¹ His friendship was an inspiration, among others, to Charles Dickens, and it is no coincidence that Dicken's *A Christmas Carol* is rich with so many nuances of authentic spiritual vision.

Bulwer-Lytton evokes far-ranging, subtle dynamics of the soul-star in his novel *A Strange Story*. In an Imagination, the protagonist meets the figure of Margrave, a nefarious interlocutor in the story who also figures as the protagonist's double. From Chapter XXXII:

Margrave at once became stiff and rigid as if turned to stone. I looked, and gradually—as shade after shade falls on the mountainside, while the clouds gather and the sun vanishes at last—so the form and face on which I looked changed from exuberant youth into infirm old age. ... The countenance had passed into gloomy discontent, and in every furrow a passion or a vice had sown the seeds of grief.

And the brain now opened on my sight, with all its labyrinth of cells. I seemed to have the clue to every winding of the maze.

I saw therein a moral world, charred and ruined, as in some fable I have read, the world of the moon is de-

¹ Sir Edward George Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873) was best known for his novels. Rudolf Steiner refers to his *Zanoni* while depicting the nature of the Guardian of the Threshold in his basic work, *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*.

scribed to be; yet withal it was a brain of magnificent formation. ... I observed three separate emanations of light; the one of a pale red hue, the second of a pale



Sir Edward George Bulwer-Lytton (1803–1873). Rudolf Steiner refers to his novel *Zanoni* while depicting the nature of the Guardian of the Threshold in *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*.

azure, the third a silvery spark.

The red light, which grew paler and paler as I looked, undulated from the brain along the arteries, the veins, the nerves. And I murmured to myself, “Is this the principle of animal life?”

The azure light equally permeated the frame, crossing and uniting with the red, but in a separate and distinct ray,

exactly as, in the outer world, a ray of light crosses or unites with a ray of heat, though in itself a separate individual agency. And again I murmured to myself, “Is this the principle of intellectual being, directing or influencing that of animal life; with it, yet not of it?”

But the silvery spark! What was that? Its centre seemed the brain. But I could fix it to no single organ. Nay, wherever I looked through the system, it reflected itself as a star reflects upon the water. And I observed that while the red light was growing feebler and feebler, and the azure light was confused, irregular—now obstructed, now hurrying, now almost lost—the silvery spark was unaltered, undisturbed. I became strangely aware that if the heart stopped in its action, and the red light died out, if the brain were paralyzed, that energetic mind smitten into idiocy, and the azure light wandering objectless as a meteor wanders over the morass,—still that silvery spark would shine the same, indestructible by aught that shattered its tabernacle. And I murmured to myself, “Can that starry spark speak the presence of the soul?”

... I turned my sight towards ... the elephant and the serpent: to the tiger, the vulture, the beetle and the moth; to the fish and the polypus, and to yon mockery of man in the giant ape. ... In none was visible the starry silver spark.

The light of animal vitality is consonant with the brown and red-brown tones of the first aura as described in chapter six of Rudolf Steiner’s basic work *Theosophy*—with Imaginative impressions of the instinctual life of the body the human shares in common with the animal kingdom. And the azure light appears to function like

reflections of mentation in the human sentient body.

The silver spark though—how consonant are the speech of its imagery and activity with the shining star of Rudolf Steiner’s mystery play! And the silvery spark is consonant with the unfolding drama of interpersonal destinies, destinies that are protected, recollected and carried into the future as if under the guidance of the stars in the firmament of the heavens, watching over the earth.

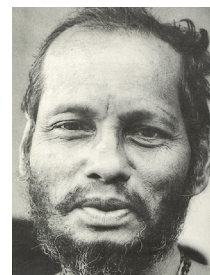
Swami Muktananda and the Star of Reincarnation

In his autobiography, *The Play of Consciousness*, (San Francisco, 1978) Swami Muktananda, a convincingly authentic Indian yogi adept, gives a remarkably detailed account of the results of yoga initiation in the twentieth century, and in a language and storyline as richly cohesive as that of *Portal of Initiation* and *A Strange Story*.

The yogi delineates a progressive unfolding of four groups of inner light realms, corresponding to four decisive levels of development on the yoga path. What unfolds here goes far beyond any romantic vacation portrayal of the charm of exotic lands, to touch on the deepest riddles of human existence.

The first supersensory field of perceptions is bathed in red light, closely associated with the body. A white light follows, in which the subtle body casts awareness over the provinces of sleep and dream. A yet deeper and higher function is carried out by a third dynamic, the work of what the yogi designates as the causal body, a sheath of awareness that functions beyond light, described as black light.

The highest dimension of awareness and its corresponding imaginative light qualities he characterizes as the supra-causal body of blue light, the size of a sesame seed in relation to the physical body. At this stage of development a dynamic soul activity



Swami Muktananda, 1908–82

begins to take on a special note in blue light. The blue light goes over into a higher dynamic that plays out between the eyebrows at the root of the nose, that the yogi aptly terms the “blue pearl.” The round, small form and its site description invoke the atavistic light of the self that we have already noted Rudolf Steiner describing in the lecture cycle *At the Gates of Spiritual Science*.

After a series of experiences in the realm of the blue pearl, a yet higher dynamic unfolds under the aegis of a

blue star. “It was not the Blue Light or the Blue Pearl, but a blue star.” (p.149) And so also here in the fine delineations of Muktananda, a distinction arises between an enclosed blue light form and one that radiates outward, a particularly noticeable correlation with the dynamic described in *At the Gate of Spiritual Science* touched on above.

With the appearance of the blue star, Muktananda enters onto the field of the core meaning of the many patterns of light phenomena:

It is ... by means of the blue star that the individual soul passes from one body to another in the cycle of birth and rebirth. However many times a man is burned or buried, the blue star will always stay the same. When the individual is born again, the blue star is born with it. When the star exploded, my cycle of coming and going was ended. The vehicle had broken down, so how could I come and go anymore? (p. 154)

The story of the blue star has arrived at a breathtaking confluence of how differing cultural and individual artistic sensibilities respond differently—how remarkably divergent our receptions are to the dramatic finish of the story! For many, the ending will serve as a complete triumph of human experience, a long delayed achievement of complete and final release from error, bondage and the suffering of earth existence.

Then there will be those who cannot respond with feelings of triumph to the drama’s finish, it isn’t in their hearts to be moved this way. Those of us who cannot relate to the note of triumph, though, would certainly err to chauvinistically devalue the genuine moral-aesthetic response of those who can.

But for those of us for whom the ending remains existentially open ended, we are left to ask—what then is the mission of the earth and of humanity? Are error, bondage and suffering in the world ultimately thoroughly inherent in individuality itself, or are they not? For those of us who are left with such questions, the path continues.

The Alter Ego and Rebirth

What could bring the modern Westerner to want to blow the candle of individuality out? Many of us are drawn directly back to the fascinating riddle we found Lord Bulwer-Lytton addressing with such depth and subtlety in *A Strange Story*—to the shadow figure Margrave, and the problem of his redemption.

Margrave is truly an archetypal configuration in the Western psyche, and runs broadly and deeply throughout the canon of our experience. He is the hard to reach

“enfant terrible” of the soul life, as exemplified in such well-known folk tales as the *Sorcerer’s Apprentice* or *Rumpelstiltskin*. The shadow must be brought into the light and recognized by name; his creative wealth needs to be harnessed and put into the service of the individuality—or he will indeed only continue on and on in the vein of the “enfant terrible.”

Modern Western psychology has developed something of a portrait of the alter ego and its function, for example, in the depth psychology of C.G. Jung. Maupassant’s double is recorded to have taken a seat in his visitor’s chair to help the writer over a difficult passage. In his autobiography, Goethe describes a meeting with himself while traveling. His likeness was dressed in clothes that the writer would years later actually acquire! Over and again, in many countries the double is reported to appear several days before death, frequently in association with a sudden marked sense of peace that comes over the dying in their final days.

And at least since Plato, the motif of the double has appeared in relation to the riddle of reincarnation. In *Phaedrus*, Plato represents the shadow twin as a force of spiritual gravity that brings the soul back to earth for rebirth. Plato conveys the story in the Imagination of the charioteer driving the chariot with two horses. The charioteer is the individuality leading a life in the body, and he depends on the two horses to respond to his cues in concert to make headway. The horse on the right is lustrously bright and fleet, agile, skilled and responsive. Not a touch of the whip is called for.

But the horse on the left is dark, proud, mysterious, and rebellious. This horse checks the flight into the skies, and causes the soul to lose its wings, and the charioteer to fall to earth. The soul is compelled to sojourn on the earth under the constraints of the body.

This is easily recognizable as a variation of Rudolf Steiner’s Imagination we entertained earlier—the twins of astral blue, one of which remains enclosed, bound to the instinctive realm, while the other, the one the individuality has worked into, shines freely in rays of individualized beauty, truth and goodness.

Rudolf Steiner depicts how, viewed one way, the alter ego functions as the lesser Guardian of the Threshold. Here the form is a mix of the soul’s perishable and imperishable features, each feature representing past actions and patterns that either follow and represent the divine, or have failed to.

Let us take stock of the clear messages the sages and

great artists of world cultures have conveyed to us. We may find that these are consonant with our own experience! Where this is so, the process of human experience and culture then comes down to this: either we dissolve, or continue to transform, the alter ego.

Swami Muktananda's autobiography is again deeply instructive with respect to the dynamic of the alter ego on our journey—he is indeed a superbly masterful storyteller of so many of its most salient fine points. In the second chapter of part two of his narrative, he tells the parable of a poor and miserable man who seems to carry his penchant for bad luck and disaster everywhere he goes. If he stays with a generous host in this or that village, that man's enterprise falls into ruin soon after, as well. In a vignette that has all the hallmarks of a portrayal of a meeting with death and the beyond, the storyteller goes on to describe how the poor man sets off for Mount Kailasa, the abode of the gods.

He spies a fellow traveler on the lonely way up, and catches up with him to greet him, to ask him to keep him company the rest of the way. The fellow traveler turns to him, and is revealed as the epitome of sorrow and misery. And he replies that the two cannot walk the way side by side together, for it is his task is to go ahead always, to prepare and stage all the misfortunes, miseries and accidents that the poor wretch has stubbornly insisted be there to meet him—for all this must be already in place to greet the poor fellow when he arrives.

A Therapeutic Meeting with the Lesser Guardian in the Contemporary West

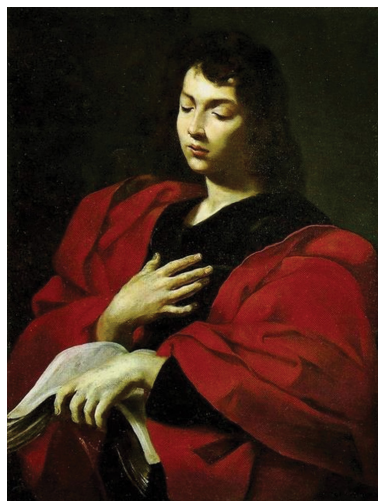
Remarkably, the Indian sage has articulated the very scenario Rudolf Steiner envisions as a therapeutic and viable technique to imagine and engage the karmic double. Recreating the scenario over and again in detail awakens the sense for karma, and a sense of the responsibility a strong individuality will feel to grow beyond the limits of a merely personal interest in only this life:

What would the result be, if we were on some occasion to construct an artificial person in our thoughts, a vehicle of thought for a hypothetical exploration. ... Picture for yourself for example underway somewhere, and a piece of masonry from a roof at the side of your path comes loose, rolls out—falling on and injuring your shoulder. Our first inclination doing this might be to accept the event as a coincidence. But then you could test out our hypothetical thought-construct man, sending him up the roof, and imagining him loosening and

letting roll out that piece of rock shingle at the only angle possible for it to hit your shoulder! If we graphically apply this technique to all the events in our lives that we otherwise dispatch as accidental, the following will happen: we will arrive at an expanded power of memory, a memory of the heart, a feeling power of memory. And doing this, we are in fact feeling our past incarnation. (Lecture, February 20, 1912, Stuttgart, GA 135.)

The feeling that our lives are so rich in meaning that we are willing to accept the hardships of descending into embodiment, so that we can live and work together to unfold what we can become together, goes to the essence what it means to be human.

Being human opens the vision of the heart across the vistas of the ages, to the point that the words of the Evangelist match the speech of one's own heart: "I will not lose my first love, so that I can stay the course through these trials that make me seem at the verge of death to myself." John's last book, his book of Imaginations, tells this story of the soul in our time, in the pictures of the letters to the seven communities. The Highest of the High shows John the Guardian's judgments over the story of the soul in each of the ages. The first letter, addressed to the community of Ephesus, is the judgment on the first great cultural age that went out from the greatness of India: "I have a thing against thee, for you have left your first love." That is nothing other than the willingness to continue to undergo the travails of incarnation until the hu-



John the Evangelist by Simone Cantarini (1612-1648)

man soul completes all the challenges of earth evolution. The fifth letter, the letter to the community of Sardis, is the Guardian's warning to our own time. "You flatter yourselves, celebrating how spiritual, how alive you believe you are, but you are in fact nearly half dead! Wake up quickly now, so as not

to allow the rest of what you are to completely die."

Waking the memory of the heart is nothing less than the will of our essential individuality responding to answer the call, the will of the blue star to stream out, the will of a progressive Platonic western Eros to transmute

all that the highest in the human being can of the ephemeral into values to live in eternity. Rudolf Steiner speaks out of the depths of a twentieth century *Phaedrus* when in the final chapter of *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* he observes that the Guardian of the Threshold has carried the burden over the eons to hold together all that has passed in the world, but that it gradually comes instead to be “the task of every truly human being to carry all that can be garnered from the sense world into the world of the future.”

C.T. Roszell teaches German at Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and is currently developing a multi-media German language course based on poetry, story-telling and guitar. This article first appeared in Germany's *Anthroposophical Quarterly Mitteilungen aus der Anthroposophischen Arbeit in Deutschland*, 43/3, Michaeli 1989. It is an exposition from an ongoing series of seminars being offered together with Frederick Amrine on Rudolf Steiner's lectures on karma and reincarnation for members of the Anthroposophical Society and their guests.

