

12. The Higher Calyx

Extract from a lecture given in Nuremberg on
2 December 1907

Together, the plant, animal and human kingdoms can be seen as a kind of cross. The plant rises from the earth and offers its calyx to the sun to effect a kind of reproduction that is chaste, without the inner turbulence of passions and desires. The word 'calyx' of course is almost synonymous with 'chalice' and thus suggests a Grail quality. The human being, in contrast, has his 'roots' (the brain and nervous system) in the air and a reproductive system that is earth-oriented. Thus we can see ourselves, in a certain sense, as reversed plants. The animal, as the horizontal arm of the cross, develops desires but is still much more in tune than we are with the natural rhythms of the earth. In raising ourselves out of the natural world in the course of evolution we have, at the same time, immersed our soul nature ever deeper in matter. The cross at Golgotha embodies the point at which this deepening descent is reversed and we can start the slow ascent towards a form of humanity that, at a new, higher and conscious level, recovers the selfless purity of the flower, as a kind of independent yet inter-dependent existence in spiritual community.

[...] We must always turn to legends for enlightenment about significant turning-points in evolution, for the truths they contain are deeper than those recorded in history. Legends show us how the forces and influences of initiates intervene in the course of history and should not be regarded as accounts of external events.

The period of transition from universal clairvoyant con-

sciousness to individualized ego consciousness was of the greatest significance, and we find it expressed in the Lohengrin myth. This is an age when the new spirit emerges from the old. Two zeitgeists confront one another. Elsa, the feminine principle, represents the soul striving for the highest spirit. Conventional interpretations of Goethe's words in the 'Chorus Mysticus' at the end of his *Faust* are terribly banal, whereas in reality they derive from the very depths of mysticism: 'The eternal feminine leads us upwards and on.' The human soul must be quickened by the mighty events through which new principles find their way into evolution. [...]

Now there is a certain profound mystery bound up with humanity and it is depicted symbolically in a myth. When at the beginning of our evolution Lucifer fell from the ranks of spirits who guide humanity, a precious stone fell from his crown. This stone was the cup from which Christ Jesus drank with His disciples at the Last Supper and in which the blood flowing on Golgotha was received. The cup passed to Joseph of Arimathea who brought it to the West. After many wanderings it came into the hands of Titirel who founded the citadel of the Grail. The cup was guarded by the 'holy love-lance', and the legend says that all who looked upon the Grail acquired something of an immortal quality.

And now let us think of the mystery contained in this myth as a metaphor for human evolution, as indeed it is known to be by those who understand the mysteries of the Grail. In the earlier phases of evolution on earth, all love was bound up with the blood. Blood relationship dictated human community. Marriage took place between those who were united by a blood tie. The point at which marriage ceased to be only between those of the same kith and kin marked an important transition. Consciousness of this truth is expressed in many

sagas and myths. To begin with, as we have said, love was bound up with blood kinship, and later on the circle within which human beings joined in marriage grew ever wider. This was the one stream in evolution: love dependent on ties of flesh and blood.

But later on, a different principle began to hold sway—that of individual independence. [...] The words of Christ are to be interpreted thus: he who forsakes not father and mother—that is to say, he who cannot substitute for a love that is bound up with flesh and blood, a love that flows from soul to soul, from brother to sister, from one human being to all human beings—he ‘cannot be my disciple’.

A stone falls from Lucifer’s crown and this stone becomes the holy cup wherein the Christ principle is united with the Lucifer-principle of independence. Knowledge of this mighty impulse developed the power of the I or ego in the knights of the Grail. And to those who were pupils in the mysteries of the Holy Grail the following teaching was given. (I am summarizing in a single passage what pupils of the Grail were shown in gradual stages [...].)

Look at the plant. Do not compare its flower with the human head. The flower, with its male and female organs of fertilization, in fact corresponds to the human sexual system. The root of the plant is what actually corresponds to the human head. [...] The human being is a plant reversed. He has accomplished a complete reversal. In chastity and purity the plant stretches out its calyx towards the light, receiving its rays, receiving the ‘holy love-lance’, the ‘kiss’ which ripens the fruit. The animal has turned only half-way. The plant, whose ‘head’ penetrates into the earth, the animal with its spine in a horizontal direction, and the human being with his

upright posture and his upward gaze—together these form the shape of the cross. [...] Plato spoke truly when he said that the soul of the cosmos lies crucified in the body of the world. The cosmic soul, pervading plant, animal and human being, lives in bodies which, together, represent the cross.

In what sense have we human beings accomplished this complete reversal of the plant? According to the true insights of mysticism, plant consciousness is that of a person asleep. When asleep, we are in a sense like a plant. We acquired the consciousness that is ours today by permeating the pure plant body with desires, with the body of passions. By doing so we progressed on the path to self-awareness. But this has been achieved at the cost of permeating pure plant-substance with desire.

The pupils of the Grail were told of a state to which human beings would attain in future. Possessed of clear, alert consciousness, their being would be purified, the substance of the human body would become as pure and chaste as that of the plant, and their organs of reproduction transformed. The idea living in the minds of the knights of the Grail was that the human being of the future will have powers of reproduction not filled with the element of desire but as chaste and pure as the calyx which turns towards the ‘love-lance’—the rays of the sun. The Grail ideal will be fulfilled when the human being brings forth his like with the purity and chastity of the plant, when he brings forth his own image in the higher calyx and becomes a creator in the spirit. This ideal was known as the Holy Grail: the transformed reproductive organs which bring forth the human being as purely and as chastely as the word is brought forth today by the waves of air working through the larynx.

And now let us see how this sublime ideal lived in the heart and soul of Richard Wagner. On Good Friday 1857, he was standing on the balcony of the summer house at Wesendonck Villa; as he looked out over the landscape he saw the budding of early spring flowers. The sight of the young plants revealed to him the mystery of the Holy Grail, the mystery of birth of all that is implicit in the image of the Holy Grail. All this he felt in connection with Good Friday, and in the mood that arose in him the first idea for *Parsifal* was born. Many things happened in the intervening period but the feeling remained in him and out of it he created the figure of Parsifal—the figure in whom knowledge is sublimated to feeling; who, having suffered for others, acquires ‘compassionate knowledge’. And the Amfortas mystery shows how human nature in the course of evolution has been wounded by the lance of defiled love.

Such, then, is the mystery of the Holy Grail. It must be approached with the greatest delicacy; we should try to engage with its whole mood and feeling and let the ideas in their entirety resonate in our souls. [...]

13. The Resonant Chalice

Extract from a lecture given in Stuttgart on
16 September 1907

The images reproduced here evoke, symbolize and sum up many of the themes so far addressed in this section and give a grand overview of human evolution into the distant future, to stages of humanity that at present seem very far-off and hard to conceive of. The larynx will, says Steiner, unite more closely with the heart and become a chalice that both resonates with and co-creates spiritual realities. Though this may strike some as far-fetched, sound vibrations have been shown to exert a formative effect on matter—for instance in the so-called ‘Chladni’ plates where a violin bow configures sand into beautiful geometric patterns. We know how the sound of a beautiful voice, in speech or song, can transport us and vibrate through us, and it is perhaps not such a huge imaginative leap to consider that this might one day extend to actually engendering life. In the ancient Finnish epic Kalevala, the dead hero Lemminkainen, whose limbs have been torn asunder, is brought back to life by the singing and spells of his mother: just one image among many in world culture for the potency of the voice.

In the seven seals that were hung in the festival hall during the Munich Congress of 1907, we have a picture of human evolution side by side with that of the world to which we belong. Let us see what they show us.

The first seal shows a person clad in white, his feet of molten metal, and a fiery sword projecting from the mouth. His right hand is surrounded by the signs of our planets—

*First seal*

Saturn, Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus. Those familiar with the Apocalypse of St John will remember that it contains a description that closely corresponds to this picture, for St John was an initiate. This seal, one can say, represents the idea of humanity as a whole. [...] When we go back in human evolution, we come to a time when human beings were at an imperfect stage. Thus, for example, they did not have heads resembling those you carry on your shoulders today. It would sound grotesque, indeed, if I described the people of those times to you. Only gradually

did the head develop; and it will continue developing. Human beings also have organs today that have completed their evolution and in the future they will no longer form part of the human body. There are others that will be transformed. An example is the larynx which, certainly, has an important future connection with the heart. At present the larynx is still only at the beginning of its development, but in times to come it will be transformed into a spiritualized organ of reproduction. You can get some idea of this mystery if you reflect on what we can do with our larynx today.

While I speak to you, you hear my words. By virtue of the fact that this sound fills the air and that certain vibrations are produced in it, my words are conveyed to your ears and to your souls. When I say a word, for example 'world', the air vibrates in an embodiment of that word. What we produce in this way today can be called 'creating in the mineral kingdom'. The movements of the air are mineral movements, so to speak, and thus through the larynx we have a mineral effect on our environment. But human beings will progress and evolve and will also come to exert an effect in the plant realm. They will then call forth not only mineral, but also plant-like vibrations. They will speak 'plants' into being. The next step will be a developing human capacity to speak 'feeling entities' into being. At the highest stage of their development, they will generate their like through the larynx, will reproduce themselves. Today a person can only express the contents of his soul through his larynx, but then he will literally 'express' his own kind. As people in the future will be able to call people into being through their speech, so the forerunners of mankind, the gods, were gifted with an organ with which they expressed and gave life to all things that surround us today. It is they who made manifest all the animals and everything

else. In the literal sense of the word, all of you are words uttered by divine beings.

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and a God was the Word!' This does not mean a philosophical word in the speculative sense; St John set down a primal fact that is to be taken quite literally.

At the end the Word will still be. Creation is a realization of the Word, and in the future human beings will bring forth living realizations of what today they express in speech. At that stage people will no longer have the physical forms they have today; they will have progressed to the form that existed on Saturn, to fire matter.

The being who spoke forth all that exists in the world today is the great prototype of human beings. His utterance created Saturn in the universe, the Sun, Moon, Earth, Mercury, Jupiter and Venus. The seven planets in the seal point to this. They are the sign that indicates the height to which a human being will eventually be able to evolve. Our planet then will consist of fiery matter, and we will be able to speak creatively into this fiery matter. The fiery sword that projects from the mouth of the figure in the seal represents this. All will be fiery, hence the feet of flowing metal. [...]

The next picture shows us that when he achieves the highest spirituality the human being takes on the form of Michael fettering evil in the world, symbolized by the dragon.

In a certain way we have seen that both at the beginning and at the end of human evolution the same conditions and transformations hold sway. We have seen them portrayed in the figure with the feet of molten fire and the sword projecting from his mouth. In symbolism of great profundity, the world's whole being is now revealed to us in the symbol of the Holy Grail.



Sixth seal

Let me set this seal before your eyes in a few words. The occultist knows that space in the physical world is not simply void but something quite different. Space is the source from which all beings have, so to speak, physically crystallized. Imagine a cube-shaped, transparent glass vessel filled with water. Now imagine that certain cooling streams are led through this water so that it congeals in the most manifold forms into ice. This will give you an idea of the world's creation, of space, and of the divine creative word spoken into it. The occultist presents this space into which the divine

creative Word has been spoken as the transparent cube. Within this space various beings develop. The ones standing nearest to us can be characterized as follows. The cube has three perpendicular directions, three axes, length, height and breadth. It thus represents the three dimensions in space. Now imagine the counter-dimensions to these three outside dimensions of the physical world. You may visualize this by imagining someone moving in one direction and colliding with someone else coming from another direction. Similarly, there is a counter-dimension to every dimension of space, so that in all we have six counter-rays. These counter-rays represent the primal beginnings of the highest human members. The physical body, crystallized from space, is the lowest. The spiritual, the highest, is the opposite counter-dimension. In their development, these counter-dimensions first form themselves in an entity best described when we let them flow together into the world of passions, sensual appetites and instincts. This it is at first. Later, it becomes something else. It becomes ever more purified—we have seen to what height—but it issued from the lower impulses, which are here symbolized by the snake. The process of purification is symbolized by the counter-dimensions converging in two snakes standing opposite each other. As mankind purifies itself, it rises through what is called the world spiral. The purified body of the snake, this world spiral, has deep significance. [...]

[...] You see here how the spiral has significance for celestial bodies, and these describe a form with which human beings will one day identify. At that time, a person's generative power will be cleansed and purified, and his larynx will become his generative organ. The purified snake body we will have developed will no longer work upwards from below, but from above downwards. The transformed larynx



Seventh seal

will become the chalice known as the Holy Grail. As one is purified, so cosmic essence and energy will unite with this generative organ. This cosmic spirit in its essence is represented by the dove facing the Holy Grail. Here it symbolizes the spiritualized fertilization received from the cosmos when human beings have identified with it. The all-embracing creativity of this process is represented by the rainbow. This is the seal of the Holy Grail. The whole gives a wonderful sense of the connection between cosmos and human beings, as a summation of the meaning of the other seals.