

## IN THIS SECTION:

The whole movement inspired by the work of Rudolf Steiner and “anthroposophy” is looking to make itself better known in North America.

We do poets a bit of justice in this issue. Lynn Jericho writes of the central question, the I AM that makes us human.

Maureen Flannery expresses anthroposophy’s awakening insights with acuteness.

John Urban sums up the gifts of anthroposophy in a parable of eleven lines.

Andrew Hoy lights up the challenge of self-knowledge in little more than a haiku.

For Christina Bücking self-knowledge comes via sharing art.

Andrea Huff finds the mystery in forms.



## Finding Our Voices

by Charles Burkam

*The following is reconstructed from thoughts shared on Sunday morning of the “Finding Our Voice” workshop in San Francisco on January 13, 2019. This was the second such event organized by the Council of Anthroposophical Organizations (CAO) to address “the challenge of representing anthroposophical ideas and methods to the wider public... and collaborate effectively with the many like-minded groups and organizations in our midst.”*

While this workshop is about finding *our* voice, I would like to share another voice this morning. This is the *Message of the Hopi Elders for New Year 2000*.<sup>1</sup>

To my fellow swimmers:

There is a river flowing now very fast. It is so great and swift  
And there are those who will be afraid. They will try to hold on to the shore.  
They will feel that they are being torn apart and will suffer greatly.

Know that the river has its destination.  
The elders say we must let go of the shore.  
Push off into the middle of the river.  
Keep our eyes open and our heads above water.

And I say, see who is there with you and celebrate!  
At this time in history we are to take nothing personally,  
Least of all, ourselves. For the moment that we do,  
Our spiritual growth and journey comes to a halt.

The time of the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves!  
Banish the word “struggle” from your attitude and vocabulary.

All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration.

*We are the ones we have been waiting for.*

But does that message resonate here and now? Is it related to our striving? *Are we the ones we have been waiting for?* This is a personal question each one of us must answer. Yet, here we are, gathered together,—so at some level we must sense that, or we would not be in this room.

<sup>1</sup> There is disagreement as to when this message was first given although the date of June, 2000 is frequently cited. I am fairly certain I was given my copy prior to January 1, 2000. <https://www.matrixmasters.com/takecharge/hopi-prophecy.html>



For me, the message not only resonates, it feels totally in harmony with our striving. From what was shared yesterday by John Bloom about being present, and the inner steps to be ready for a conversation based on “true interest in the other,”<sup>2</sup> “Finding Our Voice” is about having those conversations in a sacred manner. The questions we are working with together are about how to best create that dialogue grounded in truth, beauty, and love. In that process we will need both patience and alertness.

Moreover, this Hopi message is clearly about destiny, karma, and the state of our times. I have worked with that message for many years, along with my wife who was part Cherokee and Passamaquoddy. Moreover, traditional indigenous wisdom is more than a “like-minded” group. They live out of the understanding that the spiritual world is at least as real as what we perceive in the material world. While we have been exploring dialogue between individuals, there can also be dialogue between movements or spiritual streams. Collaboration between indigenous groups and the Biodynamic movement is already well underway.

Steiner’s focus on thinking was mentioned yesterday. It is a foundational premise for students of Rudolf Steiner’s work that thinking itself is a spiritual activity. But also, Rudolf Steiner gave equal weight to the importance of speech as such an activity. Because it is through speech, through speaking, that thoughts are brought into the world. *Speech* makes the word/logos manifest; it is a *creative deed*. Speech takes the spiritual and makes it active within earthly existence. At a minimum, it is the vehicle for dialogue and collaboration.

The rendering of the *Message from the Hopi Elders* is in English, as I cannot speak Hopi and you would not comprehend it if I did; we need a *shared language* to communicate and create dialogue. The basic quality of many indigenous languages is that they are active, not nominative. Rather than giving labels, they tend to distinguish

between the natures or qualities of actions or relationships. Living in the active tense, it can create a mood of continually being “present.” In some ways, we are hindered by working in the English language, since it has a nominative focus.

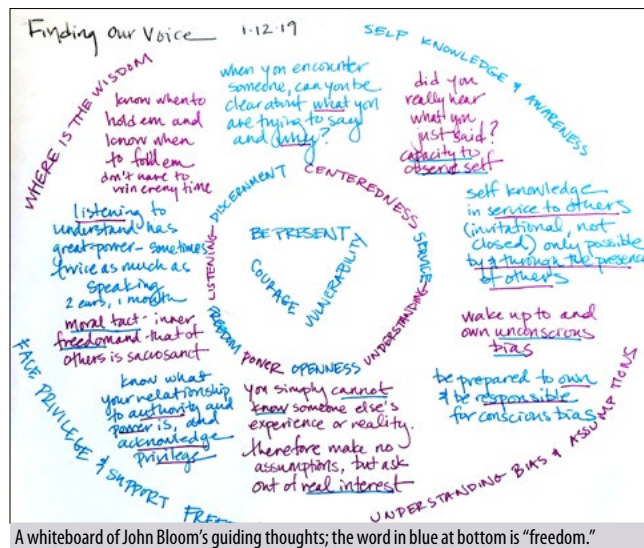
“Our Voice” is a name, but what we are actually engaged in finding is not a “thing.” It is a “doing”—an act of speaking. We actually cannot *find* our Voice, we must create it—which is what we have begun to do through these workshops.

Turning now to the Navajo, not only does their language have the active and “present” quality alluded to above, their creation story is a story of the power of speech.<sup>3</sup> In the Navajo tradition, thoughts sung by divine beings created the world. First Man and First Woman came from colored clouds that combined and then came down to earth through song. Their healing ceremonies are based upon the power of thoughts, when sung, to recreate harmony and, in restoring order, eliminate the cause of illness. So the purpose of the Navajo ceremonies is to sing/speak as the gods did to restore harmony and make evil disappear.

This process of thought/breath/speech/creation is parallel to in the language found in the New Testament at John 1 where the “Word” is the basis for all creation:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.<sup>4</sup>

To speak, we need both thoughts and air/breath to bring those thoughts into speech. If there is a lack of air,



2 John Bloom introduced his working ten guidelines for “Finding Your Voice” on Saturday morning. A version was emailed in his February 2019 letter from the General Secretary. It is the intention of the CAO to have two such workshops each year for the foreseeable future.

3 Witherspoon, *Language and Art in the Navajo Universe*, Univ. of Michigan Press, 1977, pp. 15-19 and 55-62.

4 When I introduced this text, I made the assumption that everyone there was familiar with it. When it was pointed out later that was not the case, I had my own learning moment about the difficulty of finding fully inclusive language given the range of experience and perspectives within any group. Note that I not have attempted to deal with the difficult question of use of the pronoun “he.”

what do we do? If we are on an airplane, we reach out to the source (oxygen mask) for air.

But in Finding Our Voice we also are reaching out to the source of anthroposophy for the common threads. And, like the instructions about the mask, we need to “put it on ourselves,” before we try to help others. Practicing our speaking, creating Our Voice in the relatively safe confines of this workshop, is like putting on that mask ourselves, before we try to help others.

But, once speaking, do we have truly a Voice if no one else is there to hear it? This is similar to the traditional philosophical question: Is there a sound in the woods if the tree falls and no one is there to hear it? So for there to be a Voice there must be a “hearer”; then the deed of speaking can be a creative deed. It then can stimulate dialogue and out of dialogue we can generate or clarify relationships. That is what we have been exploring yesterday in the various role-plays.

We must find our audience—“look around and see who is there with us”—for Our Voice to be a creative force. That must arise out of something more than a passive “interest in the other.” We must seek them out; prepare ourselves to be sensitive to other cultural perspectives, work towards an inclusive common language, and initiate the conversation and form those relationships.

That effort can become the foundation for collaboration in the common cause of furthering human capacities and consequent development to follow. When dialogue goes beyond exchange into action, it evolves from shared conversation into shared *doing*. This can create a whole new and deeper level of relationship and positive impact. In the “weaving” of those conversations and developing relationships with those holding shared values and perspectives, we are also creating the “pattern” for a social fabric supporting a healthier future.

But the Hopi spoke also of celebration. What are we celebrating? I feel we need to be celebrating our own lives and how our relationship with anthroposophy has changed, enriched, and elevated us to search for our highest purpose. “Banishing the word ‘struggle’ from our attitude and vocabulary,” we need not dwell on perceived “failures” or mistakes within the movement. As long as we have learned from an experience, even if it is painful and apparently “unfortunate,” we transform if from a mistake into an achievement—and the basis for future, hopefully more fruitful, action.

So, in light of all of the above, last night I tried to formulate my response to the question: What is anthro-

posophy? It is not simply a “thing.” It is more than a “collection” of thoughts given by a particular person, (which one would characterize as a philosophy, as distinguished from a religion.)

However, thoughts not brought into the world, not made manifest, have no creative power. So for me, anthroposophy is more than thoughts from Rudolf Steiner, or even all of his thoughts compiled and indexed. It is those thoughts that are alive and active in the world; it is authentic dialogue, on the infinite variety of questions encountered during the course of life, that supports individual and collective development. The “body” of anthroposophy is the accumulated deeds of that process.

Speak out of your own experience, your own learning, out of your own “truth” to find your Voice. We each can share part of the story of our lives and the lives of others we may have affected. We can speak about how we have been inspired and activated by the thoughts given by Rudolf Steiner. We can share how we have done our best to make those thoughts our own, and have acted, each in our own way, to be in service to humanity. And, hopefully, we can find a way to share what we have learned.

So lastly, let me try to give my version of the answer to the question: “What is anthroposophy?”

*Anthroposophy is the ever-expanding sum total of the impact within the world resulting from those actions arising from the insightful structural picture given by Rudolf Steiner of the dynamic interrelationship between*

*Human development,  
Societal development,  
The evolving natural world,  
The evolving Spiritual world,  
And consciousness itself—  
As the source of it all.<sup>5</sup>*

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5 Interestingly, in November, 2018 the following book was published: *An End to Upside Down Thinking: Why Your Assumptions about the Material World Are No Longer Scientifically True*, by Mark Gober. As a scientific materialist, he makes the argument that consciousness does not come from matter, but that matter is created out of consciousness.