

THINKING OF THE HEART AS AN ORGAN OF PERCEPTION FOR EVOLUTION AND METAMORPHOSIS

Theme of the Year 2009 / 2010

The theme of evolution is present everywhere this year. The occasion is the commemoration of the anniversary of Charles Darwin's book *The Origin of Species* and his birthday 200 years ago. To begin with, we associate Darwinism in an anthroposophical context with the frightening battle of existence and a materialistic world view. Conversely, his insight into natural evolution was to Rudolf Steiner one of the three conditions for the appearance of modern spiritual science (Notes for Eduard Schuré, Sept 1907 from the so called Bar document, GA 262 - *Rudolf Steiner and Marie Steiner-von Sivers: Correspondence and Documents 1901-1925*). Further, Rudolf Steiner speaks in his lecture of 1913 about "a deeper understanding of Christianity that lies in Darwinism" and that "in our time the Darwinistic impulses are born out of the Christ impulse" (GA 148, *The Fifth Gospel*). We would like to take this anniversary as an opportunity to propose a deepening of the theme of evolution. In addition, we want to advance the idea that the many controversial thoughts regarding this theme living in our culture today can be complemented by Anthroposophy.

There is hardly a subject in Anthroposophy that does not include the theme of evolution, from the development towards a free human being in the great presentation about the evolution of man and the world to Rudolf Steiner's last great work, the founding of the Free School of Spiritual Science. Ultimately it is all about evolution and self development, one cannot exist without the other! For that reason it is noteworthy that the modern idea of evolution only came about in the late 18th century through Johann Gottfried Herder, Johann Wolfgang Goethe and others.

Before this time the word evolution was understood as the *unfolding* of something that was already there, in other words, predestined in the original sense of the word. Now it is about a striving to become different, the achievement of something new that was not already there. This is the reason why Goethe avoided the old word as much as possible. This new concept of evolution is the one that Darwin picked up on to understand how new species come about in the earth evolution. The thought of evolution taken in this way certainly belongs to the great achievements of post Christian times.

In recent years the themes of the year were connected with the thinking of the heart. When you try to observe how you take in and think about evolution or metamorphosis, you can discover that much of what Rudolf Steiner describes about the thinking of the heart (March 30, 1910, GA 119, *Macrocosm and Microcosm*) relates to it. Thinking about evolution is not a logical cause and effect but a sculptural participation that ends with insight into the relationships under consideration. You can experience this in a simple sequence of leaves. In this way we are able to connect with the larger question of evolution. We mention two more questions here.

If you have an encompassing view of evolution everything can become different, and we know well that Rudolf Steiner also describes the evolution of spiritual beings. This means that nothing remains the same. Then again one can only speak of evolution when something remains the same, identical with itself. How could one otherwise recognize in the new phase that which is evolving? How could one otherwise speak in the Saturn state about the *germs of human beings*. Rudolf Steiner discusses this question from various points of view in the lectures *Evolution, Involution and Creation from Nothing*, June 17 1909, GA 107 (*Spiritual-Scientific Knowledge of the Human Being*) and in the lecture *Polarity of Duration and Evolution*, September 15, 1918, GA 184 - *The Polarities of Duration and Development in the Life of the Human Being. The Cosmic Pre-History of Humanity*.

A completely different aspect opens up when you look to Darwin for the origin of the thought *struggle of existence*. Darwin describes how the social scientist [Thomas] Maltus inspired him with that thought. Maltus had observed in the early 19th century something similar in the capitalistic English industrial society. Thus the thought was not derived from nature but from human behavior. And later, in the 20th century, the thought was reversed to justify the worst human behavior in the sense that it was only natural that the fittest would survive. You also find a connection between social science and natural science with Rudolf Steiner, but reversed: that from the natural sciences we learn and practice new ways of thinking which can lead to formative ideas that are fruitful in the social realm. Rudolf Steiner talks about this connection in the opening cycle in the First Goetheanum: *Boundaries of Natural Science*, GA 322.

With all that has been said here, a theme clearly comes to light that penetrates the whole of anthroposophy regarding the concept of evolution. The future of evolution depends on how human beings give it form out of freedom! This thought about evolution is worthwhile when it finds entrance into our present culture.

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