

Toward Synthesis

Melessei Fields

For most of us, synthesis is a difficult word to define in esoteric terms. Perhaps it could be said that synthesis—known, realized and lived—is a goal to be reached through graded steps of integration into greater and more revelation-filled centers of light. Or maybe harmony is a prelude to synthesis, and this sense of harmony prompts us to actively strive to live a life sprung from a realized whole, or create a life based on the common good of the whole or greater center that stimulates our vision. Considering this definition, each of us is given the opportunity to be a seed of harmony, to externalize the best that is within us and in turn evoke the best

within our environment. Harmony, most of all, is the acute, loving, accepting awareness of relation of each to all (diversity) and the conscious approach to wholeness (union).

Disharmony or discord, then, would be demonstration of our ignorance regarding interrelationship, interconnection and interdependence. True harmony cannot be evoked in others until we have fostered this quality in our lives. In splitting our thought into my soul and your soul factions, we automatically create a cleavage.

As we look at world events, harmony seems elusive, its seeds buried in so much fear-infested effluvia that it is hard to see where to begin to mend the various adversarial relationships rocking our planet. The thought emerges that one of our tasks is to seek harmony within us, our relationships, and our environments. As each of us works toward the accepting and loving attitude of the world server, we may evoke harmony on the outer and come closer to clearing the atmosphere for the right relationships that span all kingdoms in nature.

While being called to a life of synthesis through meditation, study and service, we take the necessary steps to approach that Life, the One in Whom we live and move and have our being.

Another means of approaching an understanding of synthesis through harmony is the practice of harmlessness, which is perhaps a subset of harmony. It is interesting that the words harmlessness and harmony have the same root, which suggests a kinship of one fueling the other. As our life view stretches, expands and embraces evolving visions, harmlessness in thought, word and action flows into creative harmony, which eventually segues into synthesis, and we then realize that the Whole is all there is—literally. Yet the Whole as we perceive it at any moment continues to expand—a

paradox within a mystery within a truth.

While being called to a life of synthesis through meditation, study and service, we take the necessary steps to approach that Life,

the One in Whom we live and move and have our being. An important fact to remember is that every effort toward harmlessness, toward a life of harmony, toward thinking and living in terms of cooperative relation with all in our purview is effective. When we answer the call to synthesis (no matter the strength or weakness of the answer), a call sounds forth from us and our note of unity is heard and answered from a higher point. We raise the sound of a complementary note to the whole that has been buried within us for millennia. I urge us to hold to the thought of true harmlessness and harmony in these globally challenged times.

We must do whatever is necessary in our lives to increase the measure of expression of harmony/harmlessness, for the automatic flow into synthesis will help us move out of a cul-

ture based on divisiveness and create a culture of wholeness and wholesomeness.

About the Author

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Book Reviews

The Burning Bush by Edward Reaugh Smith. Volume One in the projected series *Rudolf Steiner, Anthroposophy and the Holy Scriptures: An Anthroposophical Commentary on the Bible*. Published by Anthroposophic Press, 3390 Route 9, Hudson, NY 12534. Paper, 786 pages. \$29.95.

Although Rudolf Steiner's name is well known to esotericists, his spiritual writings have not yet entered the spiritual mainstream. Yet the author of *The Burning Bush* predicts that a thousand years from now Steiner will be looked upon as the evolutionary equivalent of Abraham.

Certainly Steiner was one of the most accomplished, powerful and prolific individuals of this era. His clairvoyant powers, which he used for spiritual research, also testify to his status and purpose. Steiner's advances and innovations in such fields as education, organic farming and spiritual dance were securely anchored, and have become influential. His spiritual writings on the other hand are still, after nearly a century, mostly unavailable in English. Therefore we can be grateful to Edward Reaugh Smith for pulling together hundreds of Steiner's articles and lectures and distilling the pertinent information into a massive volume on the esoteric implications contained in the *Bible*.

Although Steiner was a member of the Theosophical Society, his membership was not so much for learning purposes (he was already teaching the elements of Anthroposophy) as for networking his ideas. Theosophy was similar enough in its gist to give him a harmonious and receptive environment. But he left the Society in 1913 over the "Krishnamurti controversy"—concerning the Adyar Theosophists' sponsorship of the young Krishnamurti as the embodied Christ. Steiner was 52 at the time, and had 13 years left before passing on in 1926. Mr. Smith also mentions that he was asked to leave the TS even earlier—about 1910—because of the spiritual centrality of the Christ in his lectures.

The Burning Bush addresses 17 topics in separate essays. Some of the titles are "The Nativity," "Karma and Reincarnation," "Lord of Karma" (karma = destiny in Biblical translation), "Second Coming," "Mysteries," "Naked," "Three Bodies," "Peter, James and John." These essays are preceded by an introduction and overview of the subject. Following the main text is a large (133 page) section of charts and tabulations, in which much of Steiner's complex teaching can be found in schematic reduction.

The book is endlessly fascinating, particularly to those who take the time to proceed slowly and digest the densely layered ideas. Mr.

Smith is writing primarily for trained Anthroposophists, but his purpose is also to build a bridge between Anthroposophy and the larger Christian community. For spiritually oriented people who are dissatisfied with standard interpretations of the *Bible*, there is no better place to seek deeper understanding.

John Cobb

Peace Means Action by Yves Chaumette.
33 rue Charles de Gaulle, 91330, Yverres,
France. Paperback. \$15.00

In his introduction the author states, “peace is action, peace is a pulsation, peace is vigor renewed, coming from the depth of one's being.” So peace is not doing; it is being; and by the same token being is action. The book is designed to provide subjective support for those striving to achieve peace through action. It is assumed that the tangible means of working towards peace are well known, and that the essential intangibles are less so.

The first part of the book (entitled “Ways of Working”) provides basic background information on contemplation, the work of Nicholas Roerich, and other issues. It also presents a basic symbol from Roerich's paintings—three red points in a red circle—that is a central feature of this book, plus some exercises for working with it.

The second part (entitled “Significance or the Wisdom Aspect”) deals with the attainment of peace and the obstacles to achieving it. The author also presents a survey of human spiritual evolution, including the three crosses and the triangles of synthesis first presented by Roberto Assagioli (see article in this issue).

The third part is entitled “Creative Practice” and is a detailed discussion of human achievement organized according to the ten seed groups of the New Group of World Servers.

This volume is a deep and potentially helpful tool for effective service in the world. The review copy, however—received in 2001—has some distracting editing flaws and typographi-

cal errors, and it is hoped that an improved edition is now out, or soon will be. The English translation of the original French could also be polished a bit more.

John Cobb

Going Deeper by Jean-Claude Koven.
Published by Prism House Press, 2004. Website: <http://prismhouse.com/>. Hardback, 430 pages. \$24.95.

Going Deeper reflects both the author's broad knowledge of esoteric teachings and his resolve to make them accessible to a large audience. Jean-Claude Koven's vision of the expansion of human consciousness is presented in an easy-to-read style, as a novel in which master teachers don the guise of rocks, trees and animals. In fact his faithful dog Zeus serves as guide, introduces him to this unusual series of teachers, and offers pithy explanations when the communications gap between teacher and student seems too wide to bridge.

The main thesis is that the world is going through a major expansion of consciousness for which the mass of humanity is not ready. If people don't make the grade, they will be shipped to some other, less-demanding realm. But to help, 60 million advanced souls—including Larry, the main character—have incarnated to serve as way-showers. The problem is that these advanced souls are caught up in the heavy vibration of today's world and don't recognize their potential or mission. Hence the crash course provided for Larry. The veil before Larry's eyes is lifted and his vision of reality is rapidly broadened.

Koven does a good job of exploring the richness of the human constitution, touching on Jungian notions of fragmentary personalities as well as multiple levels of consciousness comparable to those discussed in Theosophy. He views the human entity as a kind of eternally rolling aggregate, in which new “selves” are created at the bottom as old ones peel off the top into Universal Oneness. This is an interesting concept, although continuity of identity seems to lie solely in pattern. Buddhists might

be comfortable with this concept, but others might prefer a more substantial anchor like the Greco-Theosophical monad.

Perhaps the most important criticism is the sense of separatism created by the differences between the way-showers and humanity at large. The way-showers are not the most advanced representative of the present human life-wave but avatars—60 million of them—sent to rescue at least a portion of humanity from the Great Divide. The story ends before we learn how successful they are. Nevertheless, the avatars are exhorted to serve, primarily through being what they *are*. The message is that high consciousness will make itself felt, not so much through its actions, but through its presence in the world. Unfortunately, the high consciousness can express itself only on an individual basis. We are told on page 374 that “the time for collective action has passed.” This will come as a disappointment to all who looked forward to the expansion of group consciousness in the Aquarian Age.

Going Deeper seeks to broaden public awareness of higher reality, without requiring significant background knowledge of esoteric philosophy. On the other hand, some familiarity with popular science is an advantage. A number of references are made to cutting-edge (and what some would regard as fringe) science, such as the well-known experiments in psychokinesis that seek to correlate the output of random-number generators with events that stir mass consciousness. One of the hazards of referring to work on the frontiers of science is that theories can rapidly change, leaving an author out on a limb. For example, the book refers to the concept of wormholes, which have lost favor just in the last few months due to the work of Stephen Hawking.

Despite these few weaknesses—and its corny humor that gets irritating at times—*Going Deeper* is a good book that meets its objectives. Well worth reading.

Editorial Staff

News from the School

School for Esoteric Studies

John Cobb

The School for Esoteric Studies was established in 1956 by former co-workers of Alice Bailey in the Arcane School, principally Frank Hilton and Regina Keller. Alice Bailey had passed on six and a half years before, and these co-workers decided the time had come to establish another school based on the same model in order to give fuller expression to aspects of the training they felt were important.

Of fundamental importance was the depth of the studies offered, and the new school was named so as to leave no doubt about this primary purpose.

Training

Esoteric training is supported by three pillars of activity, which must be in a balanced relationship with each other.

Meditation establishes the arena for fostering Soul contact and finally achieving full Soul fusion. Indeed, daily meditation is indispensable. Study and service can take place within a normal life process. Spiritual study will enhance the quality of the inner life, and serving will always reinforce our inner and outer connectedness. However, unless these two are surrounded by extreme circumstances of some sort, they will not accelerate spiritual evolu-

tion. For this purpose, occult meditation is the key.

Study is important for the building of the mental vehicle. The School's work is of limited value to those whose polarization is heavily astral, so study is especially crucial for those who are shifting their polarization from the astral to the mental body. Once the mind is fully engaged by the study work, this activity can serve as a power-generating source for the whole enterprise. For newer students, study can inspire, enlighten the consciousness, and help them transmute knowledge into wisdom. In the more advanced task of building the Anahkarana and the work with Will, the Tibetan's writings provide a kind of mental trail blazing in a field that is new to most of humanity and around which few thoughtforms have yet been constructed.

Service, the third pillar, is an inner orientation that results, sooner or later, in outer activity. Service can take place within the family, in a special-purpose group, the local environment, or in a larger arena. To be effective service must be motivated from within; indeed, it is often said that service is the natural result of Soul contact. Meditation itself is a valuable service, whether individual or in group formation.

The School's training method is that of a dialogue between the student and the staff as a group. The rhythm of this dialogue is established by the monthly meditation report form that the student responds to and sends to the office. The student then receives a personal letter commenting on the contents of the meditation report, addressing problems and answering any questions. Although this response written by the particular staff member to whom the student is assigned, all available staff members read the letter and all have the option to initiate changes to improve it.

The monthly dialogue between student and staff revolves around the student's experiences with the daily assigned meditation. This meditation consists, in the beginning, of an alignment visualization, the sounding of the Sacred Word, a mantra (such as that of the New Group of World Servers), meditation on a ba-

sic seed thought, and The Great Invocation. The meditation format is presented in a lesson booklet issued by the School, which also contains articles discussing the basic concepts the student will need to master.

The meditation is only one of several daily spiritual practices. The others are Noon Recollection, the Evening Review, and of course, study. The assigned study consists not only of the articles in the lesson booklet but also of portions of the Alice Bailey texts. After two months (or more in the later lessons), the student is asked to write a paper answering specific questions on the assigned reading. Upon receipt of the paper, the staff sends the student another lesson booklet. In due time, the student receives a response to the paper and the latest meditation report.

Sequence of Lessons

The lesson booklets are grouped into "courses," which together constitute the "arc of training."

The *Preliminary Course* covers basic principles and acquaints the new student with the daily and monthly cycles that will characterize the spiritual life. It takes four to six months, depending on the student's experience.

Those who successfully complete the *Preliminary Course* enter the *Integration and Fusion Course*. This course is designed to bring the student from aspiration to realization, and to help the student achieve greater personality integration and embark upon the path leading to Soul contact. There is one aspect of the course that is uniquely seventh ray in expression: the Experiments in Spiritual Living. Each lesson contains the description of an experiment in utilizing spiritual energies. The student is asked to engage in the experiment during the two or three months on the lesson, noting it on the meditation reports and giving a full report as part of the lesson paper.

Upon completing the *Integration and Fusion Course* and answering an extensive questionnaire to help determine readiness to continue working *As If* a Soul-infused personality, the student undertakes a short *Bridging Course* to introduce the various levels of Will and the

concepts involved in building the Antahkarana. The meditation format provides seed thoughts drawn from the Agni Yoga books, and contemplation, although introduced earlier, becomes a daily exercise.

The *Antahkarana Course* that follows is essentially the centerpiece of the School's training in its depth and level of challenge. The course consists of six sets, each to be used for a period of nine months to a year.

Each lesson features a different meditation format, designed by the Tibetan especially for Antahkarana students. Each meditation undertakes a stage of the building process, and focuses the student on consciously unfolding one of the six "divine recognitions."

To balance the highly mental work involved in building the Antahkarana, the student simultaneously receives *A Course on Heart*, consisting of ten brief lessons, of which the first eight are drawn from the Agni Yoga book *Heart*. The final two lessons are devoted to a deep study and meditation on symbols, to help unfold the powers of the intuition.

The study of the seven Rays, begun earlier, intensifies during the Antahkarana Course. Students are given several opportunities to assess their own rays as far as they are able. In addition they are encouraged to apply their intuitional ray assessments to the world in general to better understand their likely lines of service and the conditioning energies of different countries and human groupings.

Following completion of the Antahkarana Course, the student may be invited to participate in the Will Course, the most advanced official course the School offers. Of course the task of building the Antahkarana takes more than one lifetime, so a single trip through this work by no means exhausts its possibilities. In view of this, the Will Course incorporates a review of the six Antahkarana lessons, including the meditations. The course itself is comprised of 18 papers, each focusing on an aspect of the Will. Monthly meditation reports continue, synthesizing the Will work and Antahkarana Course review.

Relationship with Students

However extensive the training materials have become over nearly 50 years, the staff's greatest responsibility and opportunity lies in its direct relationship with the students. This is a matter of being sensitive to two things:

1. The needs of students as a whole. This is related to the evolutionary level of the majority of students embarking on the Path of Discipleship at this time; it is reflected in the basic arc of training.
2. The needs of the students as individuals. Esoteric education is self-education. It is synonymous with treading the Path of Discipleship, which is the highest form of education. Response to the needs of the individual is provided by the personal feedback that each student receives whenever he or she submits work or writes a letter concerning the discipleship work.

Subjective Group Work

One suggestion that is repeated from time to time is that students try to "work as the Hierarchy works." How better to cooperate with the Hierarchy than to become a member of the Hierarchy, in function if not in attribute? This of course means assuming that if you do the needed work *As If* the skills of higher psychism were available to you, chances are they will be to some degree and you will get the work done successfully. Most commentators in our School find this to be so and routinely use the techniques of Soul-to-Soul telepathy in responding to student work. This means that what the student needs will come through via the commentator's efforts, even when the latter seems to be working "in the dark."

Perhaps nowhere is this more dramatically demonstrated than in the commentaries for students in the Will Course. Here each student is assigned not one but *three* commentators; each sends a short response via the office, where the three responses are put in order and typed up together. Often the three responses are perfect complements of each other, indicating that a coordinating process has taken place on the higher planes.

In 1962 the School initiated an annual Subjective Group Conference to give students a practical demonstration of the reality of the group mind and to use that energy to shed light in needed areas. This subjective conference is held during the three spring festivals; it consists of material on a particular theme compiled from the Tibetan's and other writings, and includes a meditation guide.

Each year a different theme is selected for the Conference. Over the two-month conference period, School members study the material and add to their daily meditation a period of reflection on a suggested seed thought drawn from the materials. Then, over the five days of each Festival full moon, School members substitute the conference meditation for their regular one.

This simultaneous meditation on a single theme, empowered and sustained in this fashion, creates a vortex of light and intuition that can result in the reception of powerful insights by the participants. After the June full moon, the conference period ends and all participants are encouraged to write down their insights and send them to headquarters. After all submissions have been received, the staff organizes them into a Conference Report and a copy is sent to every School member. Thus by about September 1, the subjective cycle is complete and the group thoughtform anchored.

Threefold Purpose

A final word about the ongoing threefold purpose of this group within the greater Ashramic group.

First, the School as it expresses Purpose. All the senior staff and students are active disciples seeking to “consciously unfold the divine recognitions.” For this reason, the School’s work is open-ended and there is a place for those advanced students whose next step leads them to penetrate, in group formation, more deeply into the divine Purpose.

Second, the School as it expresses relationship. The stated objective of the School is “to train disciples who can cooperate with the Hierarchy in implementing the Plan on Earth.” Thus is the School related to the Hierarchy by its accepted task. The staff strives to operate as a miniature Hierarchy and students are encouraged to assist in the Hierarchical task by expressing harmlessness, promoting goodwill, and adopting Hierarchical modes of work.

Third, the School as it promotes service in the world. From the very first lesson students are encouraged to recognize fellow servers and to support subjectively the work of the New Group of World Servers. Early on they are introduced to World Goodwill, Triangles, and Meditation Group for the New Age, to name a few, thus establishing linking and supporting lines of light. The energies of the subjective group are precipitated, via the School’s members, into other groups such as family, workplace, classrooms, and study groups. These are all arenas where spiritual principles can serve to resolve conflict, uplift and inspire, and so strengthen humanity’s dim light that the arrival of the day may be hastened when the Masters will walk amongst us again and the Christ spirit resides in every heart.

