

Becoming Receptive to Purpose.

Yves Chaumette

In order to become receptive to planetary purpose, three conditions seem necessary: poise, intensity and “be-ness” which, according to the Secret Doctrine,¹ includes both being and not-being. Poise describes the inner attitude. We need to keep a firm, alert vigil in order to approach the silent, peaceful Will. Sanat Kumara is said to be the most firm in His intent, and we have to imitate Him in the most detailed manner in order to perceive this intent.

Intensity means that we become receptive not only to forms or to radiation (light, vision) but also to the factor which sustains all existence. It can be perceived as a thread of life or as zero-particle energy, if one could use these physical words.

Be-ness means that being is not given but is the result of a “divine incentive.”² Identity is the continuity in the process of existence; identity is not given. The perception of identity as a fixed point or as a solid describes identification with the body or the personality.

Some thoughts about Purpose are the following. Purpose is best approached through the mind, since—to quote Friedrich Engels—“mind is the sense of the general.” Purpose is also a proposition, if one may use such a vague word, on the mental cosmic plane. Purpose can be approached through inclusiveness; Christ Himself is still developing this approach, so we have much ground to make up. Finally, Purpose can be approached through inner stimulus: we proceed through deepening or going into the incentive of our being as much as we feel it.

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Most disciples have absorbed the culture of family, social stratum and nation. The disciple has probably taken the best part of the culture, but he or she is also likely to have assimilated some preconceptions from this field of consciousness. Purpose demands that we be receptive to the whole human experience, not only as it is polarized in the particular environment where we live, but with all telluric and spiritual possibilities offered by the earth plane. To this base must be added the strata of human history that so strongly influences our behaviour. The disciple then joins the essential significance of the human being, symbolized by the five-pointed star. Oneness, grounded in duality mediated by radiation, thus links Heaven and Earth, if one still uses these old words. These few words deal briefly with the standpoint of inclusiveness.

From the standpoint of energy, the atomic stimulus balances the impacting current of power on mental substance and the receptivity to pure reason. It is the link to Spirit,³ no longer the sensitivity or consciousness of form to its environment but a self-asserting dynamic stimulus. Since it is self-asserting, it is free

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from any tie, any link, save for His Intent. Who is “He”? The One we are trying to serve: Sanat Kumara, the Lord of the World.

From the standpoint of mind, the earth provides the soil for experience. This experience is based on intelligent creation (third ray) and develops free-will. When Purpose is grasped, we no longer search for ways to serve, because

the work to be done lies before us, open to the spark of Spirit has incarnated to undertake it.

¹ H. P. Blavatsky. *The Secret Doctrine*, I. Theosophical University Press, 1875, p. 7.

² Alice A. Bailey. *Esoteric Astrology*. Lucis Publishing Co., 1951, 594-595.

³ *The Secret Doctrine*, p. 338

In the Tracks of Hercules

Angela Lemaire

Some stories never die, and the tales of the labours of Hercules are an example. The popular view of Hercules is a dim-witted muscle man attacking everything in sight—someone who has to conquer his way up to the top. Soaring in that manner is not the way of the soul, it is argued, for we have left Patriarchy behind. The way to overcome darkness is not to wrestle with it but to embrace it: to go along with it, to understand it. And yet it could be argued that this embracing or understanding is precisely what Hercules does, over and over again, in the many labours. At the same time both soaring high and lying low may be part of the soul's journey. Hercules, after all, is said to have supported for a while the weight of the heavens on his shoulders. He also went down to Hades. The high mountains of the earth and the crevices of the sea all form part of the one land mass, just as light and dark are part of the one cosmos.

Hercules was said to be quick-tempered and a lover of wine and women: in other words, he was a human being. However, he was later

granted immortality. He thus belongs to both heaven and hell, to the heights and the depths, to both the Upper and Lower worlds. For he is as prone to joy as to the deepest despair, to achievement as well as to failure, to the most profound wisdom as well as to a destructive

psychosis—he did murder his wife and sons. One's wife and sons are one's household after all. They are oneself.

That Hercules strayed from the path like this is not the only reason he was given the labours; he was given them not because he was weak but because he was strong. The human being, Hercules, has already emerged from the

Hercules and his labours have been the subject of countless works of art from classical times to the present day. It may well be that through the arts in their various forms light can be thrown on these ancient, but crucially, and poignantly, modern themes. Is the artist no less potential hero-stuff than the obvious kind of hero?

About the Author

Angela Lemaire, who lives in Roxburghshire, Scotland, is best-known as an artist-printmaker and writer (see: www.oldstilepress.com). She has exhibited widely and her work is held in collections in the United Kingdom and abroad. She is also a long-time esoteric student.

animal self. This is graphically illustrated in the many images of Hercules wearing a lion skin, which is draped over his shoulders. His head seems to be crowned by the lion's mane and jaw. Hercules emerges, as it were, from that which he has conquered: his roaring, destructive, lion-self

Hercules, it was said, presided over all aspects of Hellenic education. To educate is to bring forth that which lies within. Hercules, who has himself emerged from the animal self, now brings forth the Hero, the Soul, the Great Man, from the human self, or ego, where it has always been, but hidden. It could be said that the image of Hercules as the muscle man is indeed correct, although it is not just portraying physical strength but is symbolically reflecting interior strength. If Hercules had not had the strength of a lion, outwardly and inwardly, how could the labours have been achieved?

According to some interpretations, each labour is a reflection of a spiritual path into the meanings, redemptions, and purposes of a particular sign of the zodiac. The early versions of the myth say nothing of the exact number of labours; apparently it was the epic poet Pisander of Rhodes who fixed the number of the labours at twelve, and related them to the zodiac. In our own times, Alice Bailey wrote *The Labours of Hercules: An Astrological Interpretation*,⁴ and here each labour is aligned with a sign of the zodiac. This book provides an amazing insight into the Greek myth, its manifold meanings, and its relevance today.

There is a growing recognition that humanity is moving into the "Age of Aquarius," after that of Pisces, which Christ epitomised as the Fisher of Men. Alice Bailey aligns the labour of the cleansing of the Augean Stables with the sign of Aquarius the water carrier. One can make many connections between this myth and our situation today. The King's stables had not been cleaned for a very long time and were unbelievably filthy. Though many had tried to clean them, all had failed. Hercules is asked to perform the task in two days. He observes two rivers flowing nearby, and after great labour he succeeds in diverting these streams from the

courses they had followed for decades. They were made to flow through the filthy stables, and the rushing torrents swept away all the muck. Alice Bailey calls these two rivers the rivers of love and life. It is not difficult to relate this labour to what is happening today. The stable of the world is, as it were, unbelievably filthy with the pollution of hatred and selfishness (manifesting as war, famine, environmental damage, and so on). A "group Hercules" in the world is aware of this situation and the means of its alleviation. As the Buddhist *Dhammapada* says, "hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love, this is an old rule."

Hercules often had to throw away his weapons; he had to learn to rely on his own inner strengths and intuitions to solve problems. He sometimes had to kneel down and get into the mud to solve a particular problem—symbolically this might mean getting off his ego—he often failed and had to start again. He killed, by mistake, many of his friends: that is, parts of himself. These are not battles so much as tasks which drew out the god-like nature within him.

The labours were assigned to Hercules by King Eurystheus, who disliked Hercules because of his courage. But the reason for these tasks was to appease Hercules' guilt for killing his wife and children in a mad rage, said to be infused into his mind by his mother Hera. Possibly modern psychology could read a lot into this, and that does no damage to the myth. These archetypal themes of rage, terror, loss and redemption have not gone away.

Around 417 BC, Euripides wrote his tragedy *Heracles* in which he uses the original legend but adds innovations of his own which alter its meaning. In his introduction and notes to this play,⁵ O. R. A. Byrde discusses the origins of Greek tragedy, its connections to the mysteries of nature and what he calls, after Frazer of *The Golden Bough*, the "vegetation spirit." The ritual of such Vegetation Spirits proceeds some such way as this. :

First, there is a contest between the Vegetation Spirit and his enemy: this is the

“Agon”: next the “Pathos”—the death or anguish which overtakes the spirit, frequently in the form of a “Sparagmos,” a scattering or tearing to pieces. Then follows the description of the death or agony by a messenger. Next comes the Lamentation; then the “Anagnorisis” or discovery of the slain, which is followed by a change of feeling or Peripeteia. Lastly, there is the reappearance or “Epiphaneia” of the risen god in his glory.

The above description of the cycles in Greek tragedy reach the heart of the mysteries, that of the dying and risen god, which in turn lie at the heart of the way of the “hero soul.” The journey is one of ordeal, of many tests and failures, and eventually of immortality. “The king is dead; long live the king.” These themes are familiar ones in poetry, art, myth, dance, folklore, fairytale. It is a theme no less relevant for us today. This hero is not only Christ, King Arthur, Hercules, or any of the many other heroes who attest to living and dying gods, but our own Buddha selves.

Joseph Campbell wrote:

How to teach again ... what has been taught correctly and incorrectly a thousand times, throughout the millenniums of mankind’s prudent folly? That is the hero’s ultimate difficult task. How to render back into light-world language the speech-defying pronouncements of the dark? Many failures attest to the difficulties of this life-affirmative threshold.⁶

Hercules and his labours have been the subject of countless works of art from classical times to the present day. It may well be that through the arts in their various forms light can be thrown on these ancient, but crucially, and poignantly, modern themes. Is the artist no less potential hero-stuff than the obvious kind

of hero? It may take courage to have “Something to say.”

The artist is obliged, if he is honest and sincere, to attempt to fill in the cracks in the soul ... ; he must dedicate himself ... to “higher purposes” which are “precise, great and sanctified”... He must “have Something to say,” because his obligation is not the mastery of form, but rather the suiting of form ... to that content, which must arise freely out of the artist’s innermost soul ...⁷

The Lucis Trust, an educational charity, has launched a creative arts project called *In the Tracks of Hercules*. The plan is for a weekend exhibition in London, in December 2005, of talks, poetry, painting, sculpture and movement, as well as the production of a digital book. Artists throughout the world, in many fields and disciplines, are invited to take part: to give a literal or abstract interpretation, in any of the creative arts, of one or more of the Herculean labours. This may extend to an exploration of meaning and symbolism, or to a spiritual quality or virtue.⁸

⁴ Alice A Bailey. *The Labours of Hercules*. Lucis Publishing Company, 1974.

⁵ O. R.A. Byrde. *Heracles*, by Euripedes. Introduction. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1914.

⁶ Joseph Campbell. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton University Press, 1972.

⁷ *Kandinsky in Munich*. Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, 1982.

⁸ For further information visit the website: www.lucistrust.org/hercules. *The Labours of Hercules*, by Alice Bailey, creates a rich source of inspiration and is a wide-ranging interpretation of ancient wisdom and myth. This book can be ordered via the website or from Lucis Press, Suite 54, 3 Whitehall Court, London, SW1A 2EF.

Book Reviews

***The Roman Cult of Mithras*, by Manfred Clauss.** (Transl: Richard Gordon). New York: Routledge, 2000; 198 pages, \$29.95.

Mithraism, the pagan initiatory religion that spread throughout the Roman Empire between the first century BCE and the fourth century CE, is considered part of the spiritual environment in which early Christianity developed. Certain Christian beliefs and practices are thought to have been modeled on Mithraic antecedents. Mithraism is also counted as one of the early expressions of the Western Esoteric Tradition.

While little is known about Mithraic beliefs because of its secrecy, there has been considerable speculation, much of it fanciful and much proven wrong by later studies. *The Roman Cult of Mithras* seeks to give us a firm foundation on which to form our own evaluation of its cultural, religious and esoteric significance. Professor Manfred Clauss' cautious and rigorous scholarship ensures the book's success in meeting this need. Through meticulous sifting of the evidence he presents a picture of Mithraism that is both exciting and in another sense disappointing.

Readers who wanted to learn about a Roman esoteric tradition may be disappointed to learn that Mithraism served much the same role as does modern Freemasonry. Its membership—exclusively male—was drawn primarily from the military, political, and administrative middle classes of Roman society. Members of these upwardly mobile social strata sought an environment that would further their secular ambitions as much as their spiritual needs. Mithraists even recognized one another by handshakes.

However, it would be a mistake to view Mithraism simply as a fraternal order or early Rotary Club. It also expressed an important spiritual tradition. Professor Clauss extracts from the archeological record a surprisingly detailed

account of the cult's sacred myths, temples, rituals, and priestly grades.

Against a backdrop of pagan polytheism, Mithraists worshipped a single god Sol Invicta Mithras, "Invincible Sun(god) Mithras." Mithras was born from a rock, already carrying a torch, reminding us that he was a god of light, and a dagger. The dagger would be used later to slay a bull, sacrificed to symbolize the release of life from its physical form to seek higher expression. At the end of his earthly life, Mithras shared a "last supper" with his disciples and then rode to heaven in a fiery chariot.

Initiates into Mithraism went through an elaborate death-and-rebirth ceremony that involved prayer and chanting. At Sunday services, members participated in a sacred meal of consecrated bread and wine for which the temple was lit by candles and perfumed by incense. Upon receiving answers to prayer, members dedicated icons to their god or to the priests.

Mithraism was Christianity's main competitor for the hearts and minds of citizens of the Roman Empire. When Christianity became the state religion, under Constantine, all pagan cults were persecuted, and Mithraic temples were gleefully destroyed by Christian mobs.

In fewer than 200 pages, Clauss has given us insights into Mithraic religion with new depth and sensitivity. This book is a must for all serious students of the ancient mysteries.

Editorial Staff

***The Sophia Teachings*, by Robert Powell.** New York: Lantern Books, 2001; 166 pages, \$15.00.

The feminist theology movement has produced so many popular books on Sophia that one hardly notices when another appears in bookstores. However, Robert Powell has some-

thing worthwhile to say, and *The Sophia Teachings* fills a useful niche.

We have to understand that, in the popular literature, “Sophia” has become a shorthand for the Divine Feminine in all her various aspects. So the author is able to consider as part of his theme personages ranging from the Greek Demeter, to the Divine Mother of Hinduism and Buddhism, to the Virgin Mary. He can discuss the Marian visions of the 18th-century stigmatic Anne Catherine Emmerich as well as the beauty of Helen of Troy. This free-ranging breadth of coverage is informative, even if it does sacrifice desirable specificity.

Mr. Powell contrasts Sophia with the Logos of Greek, Gnostic and Christian theology. At times, he points out, they have rightly been distinguished, while at other times they were confused by prominent philosophers and theologians. His own thesis is that they are complementary divine aspects that have existed from all eternity. However, the Logos incarnated as Christ and Sophia as the Virgin Mary.

Powell describes the rejection of the Sophianic tradition by official western Christianity as well as its reemergence in the writings of Hildegard of Bingen, Jakob Boehme, and others. He also provides a good account of the interest in Sophia in the Russian Orthodox Church. English translations of the major works of Vladimir Solovyev, Pavel Florensky, and Sergei Bulgakov have been available for some time. But Powell himself translated the work of Valentin Tomberg, and he explores the latter’s insights in considerable depth. Discovery of the Tomberg’s writings was, he confides, a turning point in his life.

Tomberg, who died in 1973, proposed a feminine trinity consisting of Mother, Daughter and Holy Soul. He also asserted that God the Mother was banished to the underworld as a result of humanity’s fall from grace. This, of course, was not a new concept; it is the theme of the Gnostic text *Pistis Sophia*, which dates

from the third century CE. Notwithstanding, Tomberg claims that, after the crucifixion, Christ descended into hell to rescue her. Powell explains:

We can see that through the descent to the Mother, and the subsequent ascent to the Father, Christ worked to reunite the Father and Mother. This is a profound mystery—the work of the Son is to overcome the chasm that occurred at the time of the Fall with the descent of the Mother into the underworld (pages 96-97).

In addition to his teachings, Tomberg left a legacy of devotional material that included the prayer “Our Mother” and a Sophianic rosary.

Besides his debt to Tomberg, Robert Powell acknowledges a special affinity for the work of Rudolf Steiner. He regards Helena Blavatsky, Steiner, and Tomberg as “heralds of the New Age” (p. 110). In the New Age, Sophia will play an increasingly visible role, complementing the reappearance of the Christ.

The Sophia Teachings explores many interesting concepts, and the breadth of Powell’s research speaks for itself. And it is written in a lively, readable style. The book’s biggest weaknesses are the lack of an index and the absence of references to allow serious readers to explore his sources in more detail. His “bibliography” consists of five works, three of which he either wrote or edited himself. The book is based on an earlier collection of the author’s lectures, and it follows a presentation style rather than a monograph style. Finally, Mr. Powell’s understanding of Greek philosophy is sometimes questionable. For instance he claims that “Plato’s philosophy is Sophianic and Aristotle’s philosophy is more related to the Logos” (p. 35). One could make a good argument that the reverse is true.

The book is not a “must have,” but it is a useful addition to the literature.

Editorial Staff