

Eurythmy as the mystery Art of Our Time.

By Margarita Woloschina, Advent 1952.

Translated by A. Innes.

It was in May 1908 that Rudolf Steiner spoke about St. John's Gospel in Hamburg. In the first lecture he related how the world was created out of the word. It was a world of silence, but in man, who was silent too, the word was concealed and it began to resound from him. Rudolf Steiner then picked out a lily-of-the-valley from the bunch before him and said: "*Just as the seed is hidden in this flower, so are new blossoms concealed in the seed.*" After the lecture he approached a young woman in the audience and asked her: "*Could you dance that?*" She was not unduly surprised at this question, thinking that as Rudolf Steiner knew everything he must also be aware that ever since childhood she had felt the need to dance every deep experience, so she replied: "*I believe one can dance everything one feels.*" "*But today the feeling was just the point*", was his answer, and he remained standing before her as if awaiting something. At that time, however, she did not know that the words a spiritual teacher addresses to a student are not of a casual nature but contain an indication. He does not talk just in order to make interesting conversation. So it was only much later that she realised that in our age of freedom, the Michael Age, the impulse must come from the human being, even if only in the form of a question, so as to enable the spiritual world to pour forth its revelations as into & vessel.

In the same year Rudolf Steiner spoke to the branch in Berlin of the harmony between the rhythms of heavenly bodies and the rhythms of man's bodily members. Once more he approached the same listener with the words: "*Your dancing contains an independent rhythm. The dance is a movement the focal point of which is outside the human being. Dancing rhythms reach back to the most remote periods of cosmic time, to the timeless age before Saturn. Our present-day dances are a degenerate form of very ancient Mystery dances, in which movements and rhythms revealed most profound cosmic secrets.*" And again he paused before her for a few moments, but again the question remained unasked. I must now confess that I myself was the person who failed to ask the question.

The question was to come from another quarter when three years later a mother came to consult Rudolf Steiner in regard to a profession that her daughter of eighteen wished to adopt. In thinking about the etheric body Clara Smits had already had the idea that this life- or time-body might be fortified by means of appropriate movements. Rudolf Steiner now gave her daughter the principles of Eurythmy. Lory Maier-Smits has written about this herself in this *News Sheet*. From what I have been told by those who were present, when Rudolf Steiner was shown by the young girl the results of this work, he seemed delighted and repeatedly thanked the young eurythmist. It was always thus - he, the giver, was intensely grateful when his suggestions were acted upon.

In the year 1913, in Bergen, Rudolf Steiner spoke about Eurythmy for the first time just after giving the lecture course on the Fifth Gospel in Christiania. He began by describing how we can shape an organ of perception for cosmic evolution, by transforming the forces that are at work behind our thinking and which are liberated in us after they have formed our brain. He then described how the transformed forces of the word that fashion the larynx and are freed at puberty can lead us to knowledge of former incarnations — a sphere rendered dangerous by Ahriman and Lucifer. He then went on to speak about the forces that bring about the upright position and which, in the case of man, are held in reserve after he has learned to walk in childhood. We can discover these pure and sacred forces within us and can transform them into faculties that grant us vision of the loftiest spiritual regions we inhabit between death and rebirth. "*You may ask how this can be accomplished. We have already made a start when we seek for these forces*", said Rudolf Steiner. "*If all proceeds normally these forces generally grow active only after the age of seven, but the beginning is there and this beginning will lead further. As a rule these forces, which have been saved up in man's bodily nature, are disregarded. Now the human being can promote consciousness of them by practising an appropriate form of dancing. Of course this consciousness can be produced through meditation too, but for nearly a year now, the new art of Eurythmy, based on the principles governing the movements of the etheric body, has been practised in anthroposophical circles.*"

What are these forces of man's upright position and when do they appear in the course of human development?

To the spiritual investigator that moment appears in the Lemurian age. Then for the first time the Being who was the sister-soul of Adam in Paradise and who, later in the fourth cultural epoch, first incarnated in a human body, in the Nathan Jesus child, assumed human shape in etheric form, thus preparing himself to be for a single time the vehicle of the Christ-Being. He assumed the divinely willed upright form of man.

Owing to the influence of retarded spirits man at that time was altogether subject to earthly forces and lived in the horizontal position of the animal. By reason of the first sacrifice made by this divine Being, man was given the power to discard these forces. He was enabled to stand upright and thus be open to penetration by cosmic radiations in order to receive his ego. These are the Christ forces which work in man's forces of the upright position from childhood onwards.

Do we not witness a miracle every time a little child tries to stand erect and attempts to find its balance by moving and placing its feet, surprised and delighted by the marvel of it all? It is as if a completely fresh impulse originating from another world now takes hold of it, and one that has no connection with the natural laws of earth.

On what human sense does this faculty of assuming the upright posture depend? Rudolf Steiner points to three senses as being inner senses. The first is the sense of life, by means of which man perceives himself as a being permeated through and through by the forces of life. This sense exists because a lofty spiritual principle, Atman or Spirit-Man - one which man will some day acquire for himself - is now lent to his etheric body by grace of the spiritual world. The second inner sense is the sense of our own movement in which the cosmic element, Budhi or Life—Spirit, works, and the third which we owe to the Spirit—Self or Manas is the sense that enables man to experience his own balance. Thus by reason of these three senses which allow him to stand erect, man is linked with the loftiest spiritual regions in which he lives between death and rebirth. The child brings this faculty with it as a memory from pre-natal life. We know that spirits belonging to the first hierarchy participate in raising the child to the vertical position.

In this respect the description Rudolf Steiner gives of the path to Imagination suitable for the man of the west in contrast to eastern occult training is of importance to us. The easterner attains his vision of the spiritual world through transforming his senses of speech, thought and ego. In carrying out his mantric exercises he does not use speech for intercourse with other human beings he lives entirely within the Word. Neither does he use the sense of thought or his sense of ego to perceive the thoughts or the ego of another man. Instead he halts before the perception of thought or ego in order to live in it and thus to force his entry outside, into the spiritual world. Western man must assimilate the outer perceptions and "find his way" through the three outer senses of smell, taste and touch which prevent access to the three inner senses. When a human being has reached the stage of being conscious of the senses of life, of balance, and of his own movements, he begins to experience what through its transparent nature reveals itself to be the true inner being of man. The very nature of things makes him realise that he cannot penetrate any deeper. It would take us too far to elaborate this description. What here concerns us is that this western path of knowledge, adapted to our time, can also be pursued by means of eurythmy.

As early as 1909 Rudolf Steiner spoke, in imaginative form, of the nature of art in relation to the human senses. He then mentioned dancing as being the transformed sense of balance. It must not pave the way to sensual passion, but must reflect those mighty dances performed by the planets and suns in cosmic space, which made possible the existence of the sense world.

We can recognise these solar and planetary dances in the forms and rhythms of eurythmy, for instance in the twelve moods or the dance of the planets. This, however, does not exhaust the whole range of eurythmy. In the same lecture Rudolf Steiner speaks of plastic art as being the outer projection of the sense of life. But later on he also points to eurythmy as living sculpture; and what is described as the transformed sense of one's own movement and the essence of mime, enters eurythmy as something quite objective, as the gestures of eurythmic positions (sorrow, happiness, announcement, and so on), applied to the whole human being.

Through the three inner senses on which eurythmy is based, we live in that state of consciousness belonging to man before his descent to earth when, as Adam Cadmon, he lived in paradise and knew no outer world but experienced in himself the cosmos into which his being was poured out —the

conditions, in fact, in which we find ourselves between death and rebirth. The memory of this pre-natal consciousness inspires the architect who creates forms in space. This space, however, is not three dimensional, it is the qualitative space experienced in eurythmy, for the eurythmist knows himself to be both in the centre and at the periphery, so that he fills out and fashions space itself with movements that are fraught with the power of the will. The will which streams through the limbs, and is generally wrapped in deep unconscious sleep, during eurythmy is permeated and lighted up by the ego consciousness and is thus awakened.

In his course *Eurythmy as Visible Speech*, Rudolf Steiner speaks of the etheric body as being composed of the movements of collective sounds and calls it the archetypal word. But physical man arises from the etheric. *“God performs eurythmic movements and the outcome of those divine movements is the human form.”* In eurythmy man returns to the divine forms which on earth have deteriorated.

The eurythmist carries the movements made by the larynx during speech into the whole of his body. Our head alone comes from our pre-natal life, and the larynx belongs to the head. The head, however, has arisen out of the metamorphosis of the human limb system belonging to our former incarnation. After death our limb system is transformed into the head of our next incarnation. The eurythmic movements portray the various metamorphoses that man undergoes between death and rebirth. In this way eurythmy forms a direct link between the life after death and pre-natal existence. It draws nothing from the world in its present stages of evolution. The physical body is merely the instrument it employs. It is a creation out of the spiritual world and is therefore visible to souls freed from the body, the so-called dead.

At the time of the first world war, after a performance in the workshop in the Goetheanum, Rudolf Steiner said to a friend whose son had recently been killed: *“This evening your son was present.”* He said this on various occasions to others in regard to their dead.

No other art demonstrates so clearly as eurythmy the spiritual origin of art itself. All the others have in some way been influenced by the materialism or intellectualism of our time. For this reason eurythmy has such difficulty in making its way in the world, for it does not belong to this world. It can, however, fructify every realm of culture. If architecture is not to deny itself, it must be connected with the experience of balance, to which we referred in regard to the experience of qualitative space in the life between death and rebirth. A true grasp of his own life and forces awakens in the sculptor a feeling for the metamorphoses of form in growth. And if the painter concretely wants to perceive the form arising out of the movement of colour, he can develop this faculty by the practise of eurythmy, especially by practising the intervals between two tones in accordance with the threefold metamorphosis of the forms — movement, feeling and character — and by allowing the connection between the running forms and coloured lighting to work upon him. In tone-eurythmy man becomes a musical instrument from which issue the sounds expressing the starry soul-world. In this way the modern composer, so often imprisoned in his abstract intellect or instinctive metabolic forces, could reach new sources of inspiration and avoid subjectivity. It is needless to explain what speech eurythmy can signify for poetry, speech formation and the drama, for eurythmy leads man to the primeval powers of the creative word of which he himself becomes the revelation.

The task of present-day science is that of investigating the laws of life, of becoming. Through practising eurythmy an organ of life can be formed the movements of which portray the metamorphoses of the human body between death and rebirth. The teacher, who must guide the forces brought by the child from pre-natal life towards harmonious incarnation and development, is urged to grasp the way in which they are transformed. He must develop this faculty in himself. In our time it is difficult for souls to incarnate harmoniously, By introducing eurythmy into schools it is possible on the one hand to assist children in controlling the body which has grown heavy and in which the soul is as if imprisoned, and on the other hand to help them to overcome the soul's disinclination to the earthly. The new life imparted to the etheric forces enables these to work on the body, building and shaping it through the years to come. Whoever watches a curative eurythmist at work with his patient has the feeling of witnessing a priestly deed; the eurythmist acts as mediator between holy, healing cosmic forces and the life body of the patient to which the appropriate sounds are restoring harmony. Our entire culture is condemned to sickness by death-dealing mechanisation. Eurythmy should serve as a healing medicine for the men who work at machines in offices and warehouses. It should counteract the influence of this culture that tends to harden and destroy the body and the soul.

The art of eurythmy places something quite new into the world. For this reason it demands from its practising artists the renunciation of certain ideals that we bear in us from earlier culture epochs. In former times, when man was immersed in the spirituality of the world, art bore a sacramental, symbolic character, like a sign through which cosmic forces worked magically. In a temple dance the dancer felt himself to be an unconscious instrument of the Gods. In the Greek culture epoch after man's etheric organism had completely drawn into the physical body, this body was felt to be a revelation of the divine spiritual — it was during that epoch that the Divinity incarnated into a human body. After becoming through his descent to earth a free and conscious being, man must, as such a being, once more seek the way to re-union with the spiritual cosmos. He must spiritualise his body in accordance with the laws of that world and become a conscious instrument of the Gods. This is the task of eurythmy. What in Grecian times worked in the body as divine revelation, the natural, the elemental principle, freed from three-dimensional space, the principle of devotion, leads out of the sphere of pure eurythmy to where the artist himself becomes the creator of space as, with his conscious will, he embraces centre and periphery. A gesture which does not spring from the impulse of spiritual becoming, but is just intended to represent something and is performed with that aim, however aesthetic its effect, ceases to be part of the living and becoming and differs from pure eurythmic movement as an artificial seed differs from one that is genuine.

Eurythmy is not only perceived through the eye. True eurythmy imparts life to the whole human being. For the eye, a circle that is drawn through two points at equal distances from the central point seems just the same as a circle that has appeared from outside. In the sphere of becoming these circles differ just as the ground plan of the auditorium in the first Goetheanum differed from that of the stage (see *Ways to a New Style of Architecture*). From the periphery, the eurythmist's soul receives the impulse of his higher self. If the artist wishes to express his subjective feelings through eurythmy his gestures become the art of mimic. One feels that the performance no longer belongs to the realm of true eurythmic art. The effect is impure. This art is a gift from that stern spiritual Being who has descended to the spheres bordering on our earthly world, who would fain free us from the burden of the accomplished, the restriction of subjectivity, and lead us to the living creative world. This Spirit, the Archangel Michael, brooks no compromise.

This art, which is still in its infancy (for forty years is no time at all where a new art is concerned) and is often still at an elementary stage, can, if it remains true to itself and is consciously fostered in all its purity, become a cult. The cult of a church enables spiritual Beings to come down to us on earth. Anthroposophy leads man into the realm of spiritual Beings. He who consciously turns his etheric body into an instrument fulfilling spiritual laws is visible in spiritual worlds. Man is the religion of the Gods. From the depths of being rises the image of the God-willed man. In time, eurythmy can become a cult for the Gods.

What importance Rudolf Steiner attached to eurythmy can be seen by a story told by Dr. Noll, who cared for him towards the end of his life. Rudolf Steiner was distressed that owing to his illness "*so little was happening*". Therefore Marie Steiner made the great sacrifice of leaving Dornach with the eurythmists in order to visit several German cities. And when telegrams brought news of the success of eurythmy performances Rudolf Steiner wept with joy. Should this not exhort us to make every effort to foster this gift from Anthroposophy and to smooth its path? We may be thankful to have a place such as the Eurythmic Conservatorium in Köngen in which to cultivate this new art. Led by the artist Else Klink and her colleague Otto Wiemer, it has for nine years already trained many eurythmy teachers, curative eurythmists and artists for schools, homes and other anthroposophical groups, and still the need cannot be satisfied.

Even the scenery amidst which the school is situated has its significance. Surrounded by its own garden, it stands on a hillock above the "autobahn" and commands a sweeping view over the Swabian slopes as well as over numerous factories. Many threads connect the school with these factories, partly through the eurythmy classes for apprentices and workers' children and partly through the part-time factory work that enables students to earn the necessary money in order to pursue their studies. The school's aim is not primarily aesthetic perfection, but rather the future *becoming* of mankind. And even if eurythmy is bound to struggle against the greatest odds and hindrances in the world — the earth after all only provided a crib for a God — so one can hope that eurythmy, this divine child whom we see so deeply connected with the Child of Bethlehem, will be recognised by the Shepherds in our time.