

The Earth as an Arena of Conflict

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***'In their action, Luciferic forces invite Ahrimanic influences which act from without rather than from within – they are enacted through everything which is presented as exterior forces. Thus, Ahriman is the one who rises through Lucifer, and we – humans – are deeply involved in the conflict between these two entities.'* (R. Steiner, Manifestation of Karma, Lecture 7).**

Lucifer is the seducer who is also known as the snake of Eden. His aim is to keep Man in the world of the Spirit and disconnect him from material existence, and thereby also from his proper evolution. Lucifer achieves this through the promise of happiness, light, wisdom, and lack of suffering.

Ahriman is the entity that appropriated the cosmic intelligence that was intended for man, but denied it from the warmth of Man's heart. His goal is to distance Man from the spiritual world, turning him into a material, mechanical entity that has forgotten its divine roots. Ahriman tempts Man with eternal life on earth, seducing him to extend his physical being at any cost. Unlike Lucifer, who seduces man through the pleasure principle, Ahriman promises control and power.

What is the cosmic conflict? How are human beings supposed to address it? How has history treated it? How is it expressed in Man and on Earth, in physical terms as well as in spiritual ones? In addition, we will try to answer the most important question of all: Can we liberate ourselves from the conflict? Can Lucifer and Ahriman be liberated? Finally, can the conflict itself be liberated? I will try to answer these questions while emphasizing the importance of the conflict as an independent entity that occurs on the stage of the Earth as well as in Man.

Man is the 'arena of struggle' in which these contradictions take place. The conflict will be traced on all levels of human existence – from the physical to the spiritual – revealing that the conflict itself, and not its solution, constitutes redemption.

The Earth is the fourth materialization of our existence. It was preceded by the ancient Moon, the ancient Sun and ancient Saturn. Each of the first two planets – ancient Saturn and the ancient Sun – had one dominant quality. The Moon was a transitional planet – a planet of metamorphoses which was devoid of inner conflict within the emerging entities.

'You must think away everything that can be perceived by the senses; you must even think away your own inner world, in so far as this consists of the wanted working of the mind. Further you must think away from everything that is in the world, all the concepts you have within you. Thus you must remove from the external world all that the senses can perceive, and from the inner world all the workings of the mind, all conceptions. And now, if you wish to form an idea of that soul-disposition which a Man must have if he really holds the thought that everything is taken away and Man alone remains, we cannot say otherwise than that he must learn to feel dread and fear of the infinite emptiness yawning around us. He must be able to feel, as it were, his environment tinged and saturated with that which inspires dread and fear wherever he turns, and at the same time he must be able to overcome this fear by inner firmness and certainty.'
(Steiner, 'Evolution in the Aspect of Realities').

The Sun represents light, life and beauty, which are also related to the Luciferic element. Saturn stands for darkness and lifelessness, i.e. the death related to the Ahrimanic element.

The Cherubim actually perceive spiritually what is now taking place within the Sun evolution, but they renounce all the fruits of this perception; they forego the feelings produced by these wisdom-filled images that arise there; they allow these to flow into the dreamy consciousness of the Sons of Life as magnificent, magic visions. These Sons of Life in turn work the imagery of their visions into the human ether body, thus enabling it to reach ever higher stages of evolution [1].

Whereas Saturn and the Sun represent a constant, whole essence – the first represents death, darkness and fear, whereas the other stands for life, beauty and fantasy. The essence of the Earth is conflict. The Earth represents a conflict between binary opposites – life and death, spirit and matter, Logos and Eros, man and woman, etc. Man, in his very being, incorporates opposites, in soul and spirit, and these co-exist in harmony, without cancelling each other out.

The Conflict in Human History

Human history is fraught with numerous conflicts that ended with the annihilation of one of the sides. On the macro level, empires conquered other empires, and destroyed them. When individual persons suffer conflict, they try to win by exterminating their opponent – by killing him literally or figuratively, or by demonstrating moral (or other) superiority.

Conflicts that end with the victory of one side are often the result of one of the conflicting sides' inability to contain them. The inability to host the conflict relies on the impulses that reach Man through Lucifer and Ahriman. Lucifer tempts man with happiness and endless light, and makes the developmental transition through suffering redundant. Ahriman, on the other hand, advocates control over the other and the resistant's killing. Both Lucifer and Ahriman act against the conflict since both come from conflict-free planets.

The Different Elements of Conflict within the Human Body

The Conflict between Blood and Nerves

In his work *Study of Man* Steiner presents a flow chart of two kinds of contradictory processes that happen on three dimensions – physical, mental and spiritual.

The first of these processes is referred to by Steiner as the *processes of the blood* and includes the (physical) blood circulation, imagination, fantasy, sympathy (mental), will and Lucifer (spiritual).

The second process is called the *nerve processes* and includes the (physical) nerve system, perception, memory, antipathy and discrimination (mental) and Ahriman (spiritual).

'Everything pertaining to the soul is expressed and revealed in the body, so that on the one hand we find revealed in the body what is expressed in antipathy, memory and concept. All this is bound up with the nerves in the bodily organization. While the nervous system is being formed in the body all that belongs to the pre-natal life is at work there. The pre-natal life of the soul works into the human body through antipathy, memory and concept, and hereby creates the nerves. This is the true concept of nerves. Similarly, in a certain sense, the activity of willing, sympathy, picture-forming and imagination works out of the human being. This is bound to the seed condition; it can never really come to completion but must perish at the moment it arises; it has to remain as a seed, and the seed must not evolve too far. Thus it must perish in the moment of arising. Here we come to a very important fact about the human being. You must learn to understand the whole man, spirit, soul and body. Now in man there is something continually being formed which always has the tendency to become spiritual. But because out of our great love, albeit selfish love, we want to hold it fast in the body, it never can become spiritual; it loses itself in its bodily nature. We have something within us which is material but which is always wanting to pass over from its material condition and become spiritual. We do not let it become spiritual, and therefore we destroy it in the very moment when it is striving to become spiritual — I refer to blood, the opposite of the nerves.' (Steiner, *Study of Man*)[2]

The Conflict in the Human Soul

Two forces are at work in the human soul – sympathy and antipathy. Sympathy is the force of attraction, whereas antipathy is the repelling power. Importantly, Steiner does not attach an emotional or moral value to these powers and treats them like powers of attractions and repulsion, much like the magnetic forces.

There is a certain parallelism between physical and emotional processes. Excessive sympathy is expressed in increased physical vitality, turning the individual into a mystic or a theosopher who is sunk into dreams and 'floats'. This excessive vitality is similar to fever, infections in the respiratory system, pneumonia and extreme physical energy.

Antipathy is expressed in solidification processes, such as calcification, which are parallel to a wood-like thought, i.e. the tendency to become inflexible, pedantic, dry and opinionated.

Both trends are required in order to maintain human life. It would be impossible to understand any topic without the energy of the imagination. Likewise, we cannot achieve order within our world without some pedantry and without achieving a balance and a proper attitude towards the world.

The Conflict in the Human Spirit

In the human spirit, conflict is expressed between a) Man's willingness to be connected to the spirit while forgetting that he is an entity of spirit that must pass through matter and integrate it, and b) a full identification with material identity.

The process of solidification and calcification contains an essential, invisible and supra-sensual aspect that can be discerned by the trained eye. This aspect is Ahriman. The Ahrimanic forces constantly strive to turn us into a dried corpse. If they were the only ones in actions, we would calcify, wrinkle and stagnate. We would be awake all the time and would not be able to fall asleep. The contradictory forces of vitality, softening, imagination and fantasy are Luciferic in essence. We need them so that we do not turn into corpses. However, if they were the only ones at work, we would remain children. The Ahrimanic treatment of another person as an object, allows the destruction of that person, i.e. his transformation into a 'corpse'.

Time as an Evolutionary Factor

From an evolutionary viewpoint, Lucifer and Ahriman control Man until the age of 33, at which time the Eternal Self appears.

In human biography, the age of 33 is called the 'Age of Reversal'. Up to that age, Man should materialize into an earthly entity and realize himself in 'matter': study, find a life partner, bear children, develop a career, establish a home, etc. At the age of 33, the first seed is sown for Man's identification with his spiritual identity, gradually making room for the question of self-realization and mission in life.

The evolution of the Earth as well as the individual, are dependent on the fulfillment of tasks in a given period of time. These tasks must be carried out before the demise of the Earth or Man.

If in the mental element – sympathy and antipathy – time does not function as an accelerating force and Man can continue to move between the two at any time. It is Man's spiritual development that allows him to embody both forces. This spiritual development is, therefore, the ability to maintain both opposites at the same time.

The contradictions within the soul persist over a long period of time, for a whole *seven year cycle*. The first part of these seven years is marked by sympathy, enthusiasm and initiative; its second part

is marked by antipathy, alienation and difficulty finishing tasks. The transition between the two takes place every three-and-a-half years (approximately).

However, spiritual oppositions, wakefulness during daytime and sleeplessness during the night, occur every day and night. The shorter the period of time required for the transition between the two, the higher the spiritual level of the field in which the conflict takes place, approaching a state of simultaneousness in which Time is turned into Space.

The transformation of time into space within Man is expressed by the ability to contain the conflict and its contradictions without choosing one of the sides and annihilating its opposite. This ability requires a certain containment of the silent suffering of Man – carrier of the conflict and the battlefield between oppositions. This duality is in stark contrast to the Luciferic tendency to avoid suffering at any cost and the Ahrimanic tendency to control the other or exterminate him. This is how time turns into space as we become independent of time and transcend it to reach the Higher Hierarchies.

Lucifer and Ahriman in the Human Soul

Until the 15th century, Lucifer ruled human evolution. From the 15th century until the present, Ahriman's influence has increased. The biblical Garden of Eden represents the transition from Lucifer (the snake) to Ahriman. If in the Garden of Eden, God provided for all of Man's needs, the fall required human intervention in the creation as Man began to work the soil. This state characterizes the transition from hunter-gatherer societies to permanent settlements, in which Man interfered in natural processes of growth and therefore also in the creation. It is the transition from Abel to Cain.

Ahriman and Lucifer are constantly in conflict within the human soul, but also struggle against Higher Beings. Ahriman's goal is to turn Man into a creature of cold intelligence, which does not create new things, much like himself. Lucifer, on the other hand, wants to detach Man from the development of the Earth and turn him into spirit.

The role of the Ahrimanic within us is to maintain the homeostasis required for a life of serenity and peace. This tendency is related to the etheric element of the plant world. Ahriman acts within the Etheric Realm – that of life. Thought results from a metamorphosis in the Etheric Realm. Unlike the living thought, characteristic of the 'mainstream' of the Higher Hierarchies, Ahriman's thought is cold and logical – dead. His goal is to rule man by lulling his consciousness and penetrating his unconsciousness.

Because of Man's need of homeostasis, he refuses to experience the conflicts that take place within him, and his instinctive-automatic tendency is to project them onto his surroundings. An essential stage in human development is the willingness to incorporate these conflicts, without trying to get rid of them, by raising his awareness to them.

When we live the conflict and are aware of it, we create the spirituality of the Earth. The projection of conflict generates difficult situations – in politics, between people, and in nature (earthquakes, tsunamis, etc.).

The Physical Conflict

The famous physicist Isaac Newton discovered the conflict between forces that move a mass and the resisting powers within that mass. Each body we try to move, even if placed on wheels in order to avoid friction – will resist movement. Newton called this the inertia of matter. Inertia resists change. There is therefore a conflict between the forces that support movement and those that resist it, i.e. inertia. Matter is 'torn' between these two forces.

Similarly, the soul is ripped in states of conflict. The evolutionary forces, the Higher Hierarchies, aspire to move us towards the World of the Spirit, and, in fact, towards the end of life. On the other hand, Ahriman seeks to drive us towards eternal life, whereas Lucifer tries to sever the bond between Man and Earth. The conflict between Ahriman and Lucifer, or between Ahriman and Lucifer on the one hand, and the Higher Hierarchies on the other, tears the soul and yields suffering and pain. In other words, human suffering stems from the enduring struggle between these two forces. The fear of death 'rips' us apart and keeps us in our comfort zone.

'When we study human death, which we have often spoken of, we can discover in it something of a counterbalance to Luciferic forces. Death, as you know, is not a single isolated phenomenon; we begin to die the moment we are born, the impulses of death are laid in us from the beginning and eventually manifest in actual death. These impulses within us provide a counter balance to Luciferic forces, for it is death which leads us out of temporality into the enduring realm.'

(R. Steiner, Evil-relation of Ahrimanic and Luciferic Beings, p. 91).

Each time we suffer, something within us, related to homeostasis, dies. Human suffering and the stride toward death are expressed in our plights – old age, economic hardships, family problems, class issues, sickness, etc. Death is related to the First and Second Hierarchies, which advance us into the World of the Spirit.

The understanding of the Conflict, and the willingness to maintain it within us, contributes towards our redemption and the salvation of the Earth. The contradicting forces (Lucifer and Ahriman) also have a positive role as they allow us to experience the conflict within us.

Our spiritual development must pass through our ability to contain conflict. In this regard, our friends and family play a central role. If they treat us badly, we experience negative emotions, which, in turn, arouse resistance and a strong desire to project the conflict onto others. Redemption resides in the ability to contain conflict, and accept negative emotions with their lethal Ahrimanic quality, without projecting it onto the karmatic messenger who confronted us with the conflict.

One example found in the biblical sources is God's demand that we contain the conflict within us and control it. He tells Cain: 'And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it' (Genesis 4, 7).

Cain's jealousy of Abel was so insufferable that he sought to rid himself of his brother. In other words, Cain's inability to contain his emotion drove him to murder. The astral is the emotion, whereas the ability to contain emotion is performed by the 'I'. In the case of the biblical example, the sin is astral whereas the "ruling over it" is carried out by the 'I'. Unlike Saturn and the Sun, the development of the Earth is a synthesis of oppositions and the ability of the 'I' to contain them simultaneously.

Conclusion

Our era is still tainted with the conflict-less nature of previous Planets, and our development depends on the resistance to their remains, i.e., the resistance to the influence of Lucifer and Ahriman. Whenever we want to 'annihilate' our fellow beings, be they Jewish, Arab, religious, secular, etc., we reject the conflict and project it outwards. The development and redemption of the Earth depends on our ability to contain the conflict within us, take responsibility for it, and not project it on others.

Much like the authenticity of the independence of death in ancient Saturn, as were light and life in the ancient Sun, conflict must become an independent Entity that stands between humans, enabling them to develop spiritually.

If so, Man's task is to protect the 'enemy', his fellow Man with whom he is in conflict, and not to annihilate that enemy. It is that conflict and alleged enemy that allows us to ascend to Higher Hierarchies. Therefore, Conflict itself is the source of development and redemption – ours, as well as the Earth's.

[1] – See more in: http://wn.rsarchive.org/Books/GA013/English/AP1972/GA013_c04-04.html#sthash.VLanY3oJ.dpuf

[2] See more in: <http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA293/English/RSP1966/19190822a01.html#sthash.biEPQ3fe.dpuf>