

Seeding the old in the new: the invisible, living threads of tradition

Remembering, incubation, metamorphosis

On the occasion of Laszlo Mireisz's 70th birthday

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I feel extremely honoured to have been asked to contribute this essay for Laszlo's 70th birthday, and grateful for having met him in this lifetime. It seems no coincidence that our paths have crossed at this moment of time, when the world is in a crucial stage of transition. Both spiritual opportunities and critical dangers surround us all.

His profound support has helped open up some deeply hidden inner pathways within myself, and enabled me to achieve more fully my own tasks. I could not have done this outside of the context of Hungary, and my growing understanding of just what Laszlo has awakened, incubated and brought into manifestation within a land that holds my heart.

We are standing at a pivotal point in the history of mankind where chaos abounds, and the ground on which we stand is literally shifting, as symbolised by climate change. Multiple possibilities abound, as do multiple threats. Coping with such chaos in order to realise these possibilities, and not be destroyed by threats, requires a radical shift in consciousness. What this may mean in actuality, or the processes by which one may unfold it are as yet little understood. We may talk about an evolution of consciousness in general terms, but from within the chaos of our current times, where social structures are dissolving, and that which bound us together loses meaning, how do we face the chaotic energies and powerful forces that we may feel, as the ground on which we have lived our lives begins to tremble and shake?

This article argues that part of the problem that has caused the current chaos has arisen by the banishment of the old traditions, with their connection to nature at a fundamental level. It suggests that the current civilisation has reached the pinnacle of its intention – the unfolding of the individuated ego. The movement into a different level of consciousness means working consciously to reintegrate that which we have forgotten in order to bring ourselves to a new and more complex holistic level of consciousness. This is a 'state change', just as ice turns to water, and water to steam – a fractal leap. It likens this process to growth and alchemical processes – remembering, incubation and metamorphosis. This is not a short process, but may unfold over centuries; however this is the time at which the seeds of the new need to be created from the old and carefully planted within the current state of crisis and chaos.

The current state

A civilisation can be said to consist of a set of cultural habits enshrined within social structures, and perpetuated through a shared collective consciousness. The current civilisation appears to be at the end of a cycle, culminating in a worldview whose gaze is fixated upon the external world, splitting itself off from a relationship to the inner landscape. Such a worldview, both creating and created by processes of industrialisation has resulted in supreme technological achievements in which many of nature's

processes have become harnessed to meet the desires of mankind. This is characterised by the dominance of 'reason' and the intellect whose narrow analytics have forced the ever-flowing internal and external physiological and material energies into closed systems operating in a machine-like manner. These systems are purportedly to support the 'progress' of mankind, but their effect has been effectively to stifle the very life force itself. This is the endpoint, the point of entropy, of materialism. The system is grinding to a halt.

The trajectory of the current civilisation and its purpose can be said to have begun around 600 BC. This was marked, according to many commentators, by both a spiritual flowering, and also the coming into being of new political structures with the establishment of Rome as the centre. Jaspers, for example, argued that during this time: 'the spiritual foundations of humanity were laid simultaneously and independently in China, India, Persia, and Greece. It was 'an interregnum between two ages of great empire, a pause for liberty, a deep breath bringing the most lucid consciousness' (Jaspers, quoted in Armstrong, 2006). At this point the old structures were collapsing, and new ones still had not arrived. Jaspers was interested in the similarities in the thinking of these great spiritual pioneers such as Siddhartha Gautama (The Buddha), Confucius, and Socrates. All these teachers instigated traditions of travelling scholarship when scholars roamed from city to city to exchange ideas. Plato later recalled this as a period of 'anamnesis' – or a remembering of things forgotten. Voeglin (2001) characterised this period as a 'leap of being' when individual values began to emerge from societal ones.

The materialistic view of the universe reached its apogee at the end of the 19th century. It came about as a result of a scientific method that had finally dismissed the possibility of anything existing beyond what could be seen and therefore measured. Any meaningful or inspirational perspective had been eliminated within the scientists' gaze. reduced to a mere subjectivity that in and of its own was deemed scientifically valueless. Kant's influential understanding that what we could know from the external world was never a 'thing-in-itself' – only our mind's construction of it, was the nail in the coffin of any felt relationship with nature. Our thought patterns had become split off from our experience creating an ultimate prison from the external world leading to intense alienation.

Today we see this everywhere in the signs of out-of-control growth; from the etiolated forms of humans as their bodies are mechanically re-engineered; to an economic system where money as a form of exchange has reached figures that are incomprehensible; to out-of-control mental and emotional states unable to cope with, and indeed creating, the environmental, ecological and political chaos.

Nevertheless, the outcome of the trajectory, and perhaps its greater purpose, has been the development of the individualised ego. Each individual, has the generic capacity to reach more integrated states of consciousness through actualising her or his unique destiny within the greater collective. This cannot be done by individuality alone, but will need reconnecting first with the universe from which our minds are currently separated.

This long trajectory of individualisation has reached the end of its cycle. Just as Plato names that earlier period as one of 'anamnesis' so today the task is working consciously

to reintegrate that which we have forgotten in order to bring ourselves to a new and more complex holistic level of consciousness. This means contacting the older forms of consciousness and reintegrating them into the brighter levels of consciousness that are the achievements of the last 2000 years.

The preservation and evolution of the traditions

In this 2000-year process, the truths of the old traditions that served humanity spiritually and socially have gone to ground. Whilst we could trace the beginning of their elimination through the suppression of pagan rites in the first four centuries of this era, followed by the brutal zeal of the enlightenment, now they are strangled by the tentacles of Western consumer capitalism. However they have not disappeared altogether, having been preserved through the reflowering of the old Platonic ideals of the renaissance, through the old alchemical and hermetic practices whose signature continued through literature and art both of the classical and romantic eras. The great works of Goethe, Shakespeare and Blake, for example carry through the truths of these traditions, in albeit more hidden ways. In the 20th century they survived through the hidden evolution of occult societies, and through the influx of eastern truths and systems that have been embraced within the west.

As our civilisation is on the cusp of a great transition, how do these profound traditions evolve to support the process and how do we preserve that in a modern day consciousness? Just as the seed contains the potential for all that is to come, sinks down into the earth, and emerges as stalk, leaves, then fruit and finally returns as seed again – everything that is incorporated within the final seed contains the wisdom and lived out substances, reformed once again, and entering life as a new plant, but at a different level. This can be formulated in the simple path of ‘remembering, incubation, metamorphosis’.



Remembering

One of the greatest tasks of the present day is the process of remembering that which has been forgotten in this long trajectory of individualisation. This requires access to, and reformulation of, the vast systems of knowledge stored within the wisdom traditions, integrated within, but not subordinate to, the methods and empirical findings of modern science.

We cannot do this solely from our present day consciousness that has eliminated, or pushed to ground, these earlier (and equally important) states. This means actually returning not just to the texts, or teachings, or digging out the remains of the old spiritual centres, but engaging with these in the same way in which they were experienced and transmitted in the earlier days. We have a responsibility not just to remember – but also to re-experience, and then to re-integrate at a higher level. We do not dismiss the achievements of the last 2000 years, but find ways of integrating these within our current lives. This is as much a bodily, physiological and mental transformation.

Let's use the words of the great polymath Steiner, who encourages us again and again not to freeze ourselves with the purely abstract and inherently deadening forms of knowledge that characterises our universities today:

'Today it is almost impossible to understand what the teachers in the ancient mysteries told their disciples. For when someone wants to explain the human heart today he takes an embryo and sees how the blood vessels bud and at first there is a tube, with the heart gradually taking shape. That is not how the teachers in the ancient mysteries spoke to their pupils. They would have considered it no more important than what goes on when you knit a sock, for ultimately the process seems much the same. But they put emphasis on something that they considered tremendously important. They would say; "The human heart is the outcome of the gold which lives everywhere in the light, gold which comes streaming in from the universe and actually creates the human heart". The way they saw it was this: light moves through the Universe and the light bears the gold. Gold is everywhere in the light, it is alive and active in the light. And during life on earth the human heart – as you know it changes every 7 years – is not made up of the cucumbers and lettuce and roast veal which people have been eating but, and the ancient teachers knew it, of the gold in the light ... yes people put things in a different way and we must become aware of this difference for we have to learn to speak the way they did again, except that it will be at a different level of conscious awareness. (Steiner, p. 45, 2016)

What Steiner encourages us to do is to be able to 're-view' our understandings of history and consciousness – not in a linear form moving from point to point, but to embrace a former way of seeing within our bodies – or to put it another way to 'feel into' that earlier form of consciousness, embedded deeply within nature, to seek out the impulses that still interweave within our current reality. It is to recover a relationship with the 'gold' but from the light of modern-day consciousness. Thus these insights become integrated within and synthesised to another level.

It was the great initiates of the past who were able to help guide people into right relationship with the cosmos, bringing through the spiritual gifts from the stars. In our

current 21st century consciousness, we have ‘forgotten’ the feeling state of such a participation, which yet still takes place unconsciously in our sleeping and dreaming states.

Let’s use the great insights of Steiner again to understand the depth of this process:

‘The wide-awake state of mind in which we have our everyday life and pursuit of knowledge today was something totally unknown to an earlier humanity. But this was where the possibility arose for pure thought, the existence of which may make us despair, but from which alone we can gain the impulses for freedom. If humanity had never gained this faculty of pure thought, which does not at the same time establish existence but is pure thought, neither would we ever have gained awareness of freedom...Humanity had moved a long way into a particular darkness, the darkness in which the impulse for freedom lies but the light of spirituality does not shine. Do develop a real feeling for the way this really was in human evolution. Looking back into an early age, we see human beings looking up into the starry heavens, saying to themselves :’The powers of those starry heavens live in me; I am part of this cosmos. As a spirit, man has been forced down to earth. The heavens had grown dark, so to say, for human beings were not able to see through, to understand the light, even sunlight or the light of the stars, all that shone down in a physical way ‘” (Steiner, p.131, 2016)

These insights, this ability to see deeply into the cosmos and into our human evolution is what we have the possibility to recover for ourselves – each as a unique individual. We now have the possibility of freedom of enabling that brighter consciousness to come into connection, in some form or other, with those earlier states. This hard won, yet now misdirected individualism, means that we have the freedom to choose, to take responsibility, to develop our own individual ethical code, and most importantly to live by it.

Incubation

As we incubate these traditions, we need to re-imagine these forms in a language and intention that serves humanity in its current condition. These need restating, reworking, reintegrating with the fruits of our current civilisation. We cannot simply bring through correlations and older interpretations as a piecemeal recipe, which is but a superficial divinatory tool pandering to desire, but needs a totally reworked metaphysics that can embrace causality and synchronicity – newer understandings of time and space that embrace the old and the new, and the future.

To break down the brittle and rigid mind sets of the 21st century, we need to be able to understand ourselves as part of a vast living system, stretching across layers of time and space; this does not mean riding the energies of the cosmos without recourse to our fellow wayfarers, which would be a perverted form of the individualism, but to find ways of collaborating and making conscious that which connects us.

The profundity of the older systems encompass, or enfold space and time in constellated form. They can move from the grandeur of the cosmos to practical ways of learning how to live human lives. Nevertheless, such systems begin with the experience of being human, and how to exist in true relation with mother nature.

They are part of the collective unconsciousness of humanity. The *I Ching* for example, is a vast cosmology encompassing processes of birth, death, families, government, physiology, psychology, ethics – a complete integrative way of understanding the great cycles of change. Here, the human being stands on the earth, yet is connected with the sky, mediating these great forces, flowing with the Tao.

Astrology as resurrected in its current form barely scrapes the surface of its meaning as an algebra of the human soul – as a symbolic system that offers up individual and collective meaning – and a guide to realising order and harmony within the human realm. Astrology, or a reflection of cycles of change as manifested by human consciousness through the relationship with our cosmos, is a symbolic representation of this relationship. It was through developing this relationship that earlier initiates mapped out the contours of the cosmos and laid down the layers of our mind. The task for the modern astrologer is to re-iterate, re-integrate, re-view, how we understand our relationship with the cosmos in current scientific times, which at present has been (largely) revisioned within the limited scientific view. It tends to be viewed as a dry 'map' of the future, rather than a co-created and endlessly flowing reiteration of matter and energy.

As we have seen earlier, through the reflections of Steiner, our current forms of 'knowing' have emerged from (and manifested) our earliest forms of relationship with the universe. When science began to split itself from nature, so astrology became reduced to astronomy and alchemy to chemistry, so the wholeness of our worldview became split. Re-visioning astrology means finding a new metaphysics that is able to view the world with the old 'druidic' consciousness, but integrated and newly expressed in the concepts that have been generated within the scientific traditions. This is opening up entirely new territory. Some of this is underway, and can be particularly seen in the insights and pioneering work of Dane Rudhyar who would say that: that: 'astrology is to all empirical sciences dealing with the formation, growth, behaviour and disintegration of organic wholes what mathematics is to physics and in general to inanimate objects. We do not say that it is recognised as such but that is its true function'. (Rudhyar, p, 42, 1935).

We could say then that the current incubation period is that of containing the powerful forces as they come together within the crucible of transformation. This is where the experience and confidence of the old magicians can focus their intent and minds on these processes of change. This means re-entering the alchemist's crucible with the consciousness of the 21st century, but a newly found humility as we are witnessing the collapse of the last era. This will require all the powers of will as we commit to devoting our freedom to the whole. It will also require a deep engagement with the different pathways that have been mapped out throughout time as certain initiates have pioneered through the darkness.

Metamorphosis

What these turn into as we meet the current challenges, making our individual and collective ways through this period, we cannot begin to know. However, if our intentions are sound, if we are constantly focussing on what is needed for the collective and for nature, then we can stay in the 'not-knowing', waiting patiently for its unfoldings.

Fortunately, these wisdoms lie in the invisible threads left by former spiritual practitioners and constantly being woven by those of today. Through the connections of these invisible threads throughout the cosmos, we can access cosmic memory, rebuild connections, warping and weaving through time and space.

Coming back into right relationship with the cosmos opens up the portals of our consciousness to greater reaches of awareness and deeper intuitions. As in the hermetic statements 'as above, so below', so we have the potential to open up the more unconscious aspects of our body and relationships; we can learn to ground and yet expand the energy of awareness.

We become one another's mirrors in this process, establishing collective tasks and our unique contribution to these. It demands the development of a unique ethical, or rather perhaps aesthetical code, no longer determined by collective, tribal rules of conduct, or societal structures. It demands a rigorous appraisal and re-view of our own conditioning, and the courage for each of us to go beyond, embracing the potential for freedom that has been laid down by some of our predecessors. At a simple level, just as Voeglin characterised the earlier period as the development of individual as opposed to societal values; the task now is for the newly fledged individual to come into right relationship with the collective through her own internal ethical/aesthetic compass, no longer conditioned biologically, or at least with a greater awareness of this biological conditioning.

Above all, it requires deep work with the mind and the body, and new ways of interconnecting at a level that humanity has not known before.

These processes are already underway. Laszlo Mireisz has tirelessly undergone this work of integrating east and west, and bringing through the traditions through the creation of the Javas School and the Buddhist University. From his own insights into the Hungarian traditions, into the Buddhist and Chinese traditions and his deep work over his lifetime with the communities he has created, he has laid down the foundations for generations to come. I look forward to seeing these invisible threads grow and connect with the work of other spiritual practitioners who in their own way are engaged in this work. Only in this collaborative spirit can we co-create new structures strong enough to withstand the powerful forces that currently confront us.

I would also like to make a further conscious connection here between the Welsh bardic tradition that is currently coming into life in various ways, and the Hungarian traditions, which ultimately perhaps, draw on common sources. I look forward to the sharing of perspectives at some point in the future. Both preserve these intimations of deeper wisdoms through the music of their languages, and the forms of their teachings.

References

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