Some Thoughts on the Conditions Needed for Imaging Methods

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Background Conditions

Understanding the context of imaging methods (*bildschaffende Methoden*) and their methodologies is vital for their support and promotion. What follows are some thoughts on the conditions that these methods demand of us in the light of their context.

The foundation of imaging methods is built upon layers of conditions that are necessary for these methods. The first condition for imaging methods is a contextual one. When we look at these methods we are immediately aware that they have arisen out of the heart of anthroposophy itself. They came about because individuals[1] who, out of their knowledge of anthroposophy, asked Rudolf Steiner if there was a way to see *how* the imponderable forces – specifically, etheric formative forces and forces of vitality work into matter. These imaging methods are the foundation of an anthroposophical oriented science, for they reveal, with certainty, the activity of the etheric world.

Ralph Waldo Emerson[2], in the introduction to his renowned essay 'Nature', clearly states what the second condition is: "Undoubtedly we have no questions to ask which are unanswerable. *We must trust the perfection of the creation so far, as to believe that whatever curiosity the order of things has awakened in our minds, the order of things can satisfy"*; and later on, he says, "*Whenever a true theory appears, it will be its own evidence"*.

In these short sentences we have the basis beautifully set: firstly, questions are not only viable but essential, and all are answerable; and secondly, the perfection of creation contains within it an order that allows answers to unfold in a way that follows the lawfulness of creation. If we stand by these two italicised sentences with unwavering strength, the yield of our inquiry will be enormous. We will come back to the role of sequential questioning later.

1 The early pioneers: Lili Kolisko, Steigbild; Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, Sensitive Crystallization; Dr. Werner Kaelin, Blood Steigbild; and later in the 1950's, Theodor Schwenk, Drop-Picture Method.

2 Ralph Waldo Emerson was an American philosopher and a follower of Goethe.

Another aspect of inquiry needs to be attended to if the modern soul is to overcome doubt in the validity of these methods, and this is the question of 'proof'. This is a consciousness soul prerequisite. When working with imaging methods, we ask: "What are our pictures saying and how do we know *what* they are saying is true?" For some people, working with these methods, this question brings enormous struggles and questions.

Let us first consider the question as to whether there is a universal 'proof' for all stages of creation – the ponderable world, the physical world, and the supersensible world – or, whether both stages have different conditions of existence and therefore require ever more subtle, refined methods of proof. This we know with the intellect but very often we find ourselves in an epistemological quagmire, because we move from one realm to the other without a great deal of consciousness. This is not done intentionally; rather it comes about because we have been inattentive to the processes required for each level or, we have not obeyed the lawfulness of the various stages of inquiry with appropriate discipline or, we simply are *not yet* in a condition to exercise soul qualities needed for such levels.

The inorganic world

When we look at the inorganic world we perceive a world that is finite, measurable and weighable. This world is formed, finished and inert: it can only be changed from without. It is a world that is a conglomeration of isolated objects and processes, a world that has boundaries and is fixed. To ferret out the laws pertaining to this world we need sense perceptions and thoughtful observations.

Fundamental to these laws is the idea that 'effects have operative causes'. In science, an experiment is set up in such a way that all variables and accidental elements are removed so that a single fact is revealed and can tell its irreducible story. These are Goethe's 'primal phenomena'. These show themselves, one after the other, so that gradually a body of knowledge about the inorganic natural world becomes apparent. To grasp a sense of the 'whole' we are faced with the daunting task of relating, contiguously, all existent 'primal phenomena, of the entire universe!', The picture is never complete until *all* existent facts of the inorganic universe are uncovered. Analysis is the mode of thinking used to reduce the known to its basis: thus we can only replicate nature at this level.

When we turn to the organic world a shift in our thinking is required. Here, what was available to us as a scientific methodology of 'proof' or 'certainty' must be taken to another level – we must use a method different from that which has been applied hitherto.

The organic world

In the organic world, matter is taken up into the stream of life and is reorganized by formative principles from 'within', through time. Here, entities are constantly changing, are unfinished. In the stream of time, at any given moment where a form appears, it is 'the form *at that time*, *at that stage*'. If we take a plant as an example, and observe the stages of appearances, we see the cotyledons, then the species' leaves appear at