

THREE DOCTORS AND THE HEALING IMPULSE IN THE GENERAL ANTHROPOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

The following will be an exploration of closely interrelated biographies - those of three individuals who have greatly contributed to furthering Rudolf Steiner's legacy, and have also been keenly aware of the need for social harmony in anthroposophical institutions and at the level of the General Anthroposophical Society (G.A.S.), both nationally and worldwide. This contribution was offered as a continuation to lectures offered in October 2018 at the national conference of the New Zealand Anthroposophical Society as a coda to the last lecture.

Many among us know of the tragic legacy of the 1930s crisis in the G.A.S. That is all too clear, and we can surmise that we still suffer from the repercussions of events in our collective past. What does not appear as clearly is that a careful look at our collective karma also offers us potent indications about the way upward and out of a sterile repetition of the past, or a passive acceptance of its results.

It is, to say the least, uncanny that the three individuals here observed were Dutch and were doctors in medicine. Their healing impulse, stemming from their profession, extended to the social sphere. And their intersecting efforts were instrumental in preserving the unity of the Anthroposophical Society at a time in which it was greatly threatened. Their contributions are of such magnitude that they reverberate past their time on earth. Looking at these key individualities means therefore acquiring a larger perspective on modern challenges.

It will be the goal of this essay to show how these individuals were able to bridge divides, in this instance between concrete Michaelic impulses. They were able to do so because they could first and foremost accomplish a synthesis of polarities in their own souls, before this achievement could carry results in the outer circles of their lives. It is this last aspect that remains a challenge for the present. It forms an invitation for each one of us to reach beyond what we already are, to what we can truly be, when we seek to follow the injunctions of the Foundation Meditation Stone to "truly live", "truly feel" and "truly think."

This essay borrows heavily from what I have written previously in the book *Aristotelians and Platonists: The Convergence of the Michaelic Streams in the Third Millennium*, so much so that entire passages are lifted from it. In that book the exploration was confined to the polarity represented by the beings and corresponding views of Willem Zeylmans van Emmichoven and Bernard Lievegoed, who formed a very close friendship and collaboration at the top of the Dutch Anthroposophical Society. Their interests naturally extended from there to the global Society.

The karma of these two individuals led them to play a part at their respective national level. The third individual is Ita Wegman, whose personal destiny it was to be one of the closest of Steiner's collaborators. She naturally understood what stakes were at play with the fate of the G.A.S. After Steiner's death, and most intensely in the first half of the 1930s, she was immersed in the growing crisis that led the Society to a de facto split, in which two of its members were expelled from the Vorstand (executive board of the G.A.S.), others were expelled from the G.A.S. and some National Societies were greatly estranged from Dornach.

Ita Wegman spent much of her time after Steiner's death promoting the legacy of the First

Class of the School of Spiritual Science and the anthroposophical medical impulse in two directions; anthroposophical medicine and the incipient curative education and social therapeutic impulse that Steiner had encouraged before his death. In fact, the three Dutch doctors had an interest both in the fate of the Society as well as in the continuation and deepening of medical and curative impulses.

We will look first at the lives of Zeylmans van Emmichoven and Lievegoed in an abridgment of what I have already previously written. Ita Wegman stands in a way as a higher-level synthesis of the work of integration accomplished by her two colleagues. After all, only she was placed by karma in a place in which she could represent anthroposophy globally.

No two individuals could present themselves to the world in as starkly different ways as Lievegoed and Zeylmans van Emmichoven. They understood it and sought each other for what they were missing, or what they could start to integrate more fully. Thus it was that the younger Lievegoed grew under the tutelage of van Emmichoven. The older understood, in passing the baton to the younger, that in Lievegoed the Dutch Anthroposophical Society would find a different kind of leadership than the one he had impressed on it for nearly 40 years - no small sign of trust both in a fellow human being and in the guidance of the spiritual world.

Let us look briefly at some of Zeylmans van Emmichoven's accomplishments.

Frederick Willem Zeylmans van Emmichoven,

Born in 1893, Frederick Willem Zeylmans van Emmichoven became one of the most important Dutch anthroposophists, leading the National Society from 1923 until 1961, the year of his death. Among other things, van Emmichoven contributed to the founding of the first Dutch Waldorf school in The Hague, started a psychiatric hospital, lectured worldwide on anthroposophical themes and wrote various books.

As a child van Emmichoven had a very strong imaginative life, and great love for gardens. In contrast he was shocked by the bleak world of the factories and tenements that surrounded him. Living close to factory workers' houses, the contrast between the beauty of the gardens and the ugliness of people and buildings marked his soul. He felt the need to protect himself from this ugly reality, by imagining a world of lovely young people, a world "where only young, radiant people lived" and "everything there was perfect,"¹ Predictably, the boy experienced school as a prison. Once more he found refuge in his inner world. In this world he was a king on a white horse and he imagined all sorts of great adventures.

Not only was his inner life imaginative, it also opened up to direct spiritual perception. Demons appeared for the first time when the boy was five. They looked like animals and yet different from them. "They were all as frightful as each other, and he could feel himself going rigid with fear."² Only in later years did his inner voice enjoin him to look the beings in the eyes because this would make them vanish. When he did this he experienced great dread, but the demons effectively started to dissolve. These visions went on for years, especially when he was tired or ill at ease.

The young boy could also experience the elementals of the animal world. He could perceive the elemental dimensions of animals, a "something" that was both friendly, gentle,

¹Emanuel Zeylmans, *Willem Zeylmans von Emmichoven: An Inspiration for Anthroposophy. A biography*, 8.

²Ibid, 10

delicate, ... and eerie and frightening.”³ In addition van Emmichoven mentions something else of interest, though only in passing. In his neighborhood he could see many drunkards, and he could recognize whether they were affected by wine, beer, or other liquors quite precisely, based on the elemental beings that accompanied them.

When at school he had the first opportunity to write a story, the teacher declared that the class had found a poet. From that moment on his inner life was fired. What he had done in his imagination, he could now put on paper. He started writing long essays, reading stories, poems, novels, world literature. Another absorbing world was that of light and darkness that he found in painting. In a museum he had a deeply significant experience. After feeling overwhelmed by the amount of paintings, “... suddenly, like a flash of lightning, he saw what was around him: deep shimmering colors, radiant bright colors, fiery blazing colors, colors that quietly drew him into the distance. Slowly he began to see the paintings themselves, to distinguish one from another and at last to know them.”⁴ And something else offered him relief. He could now see the familiar demons he knew so well in the paintings - he in fact recognized most of them - and knew by this that others had experienced them.

While engaged in his medical studies, he continued to explore color in modern paintings together with two friends who painted. In July of 1920 he started to conduct experiments on color. In a darkened room he exposed people to different colors. The subjects were simply asked to beat a regular rhythm on an electrical apparatus, and the resulting tempo was recorded in relation to clock time. The results showed the fastest rhythms between yellow and orange, the slowest ones between blue and violet, and the middle ones in the green part of the spectrum. But what was of further interest was that at the other side of the spectrum, there was a point of balance similar to green in the color crimson. At the time he was still under the sway of Newton’s physics, even though he had read some of Goethe’s writings on color and was open to them.

He was getting ready for a breakthrough, and what came next were Steiner’s writings on Goethe, which helped him cross the threshold of his hesitations. He had an epiphany: “So I went to the university library and asked for Goethe’s scientific writings, and began to read Rudolf Steiner’s introduction, and suddenly, lo and behold, a bolt of light flashed down from the heavens and struck through me, as I read Rudolf Steiner’s sentence: ‘Our image of the visible world is the sum of perceptions metamorphosing independently of underlying matter.’” And further, “A whole world opened and showed me color as a living being.” This led to the unavoidable conclusion: “I went to Frau Wolfram, the group leader, and told her I would like to join the Society.”⁵ This he did because he wanted to study an as yet unpublished medical course cycle now given to members of the Society.

In December 1920 van Emmichoven traveled to Dornach and heard Steiner lecture for the first time. It was a turning point in his biography. When Steiner appeared, he remembered later: “At this moment I had a clear experience of recognition. This was so strong that a whole series of images surfaced in me at the same time, vaguely recalling former situations - as though I recognized him as my teacher through the millennia. It was the most powerful experience I have had in my whole life. For a long time I sat, lost in thought, and only later did I realize that the

³Ibid, 12.

⁴Ibid, 18.

⁵Ibid.

lecture had begun.”⁶ We will return to one instance of ‘former situation’ later. Not only were memories stirred; he was also deeply touched by Steiner’s appearance, which for him personified the full human being in its whole potential.

To Steiner van Emmichoven talked about his work with the color spectrum. He explained that “green was a zero-point because all the feeling responses were there in equilibrium; and crimson was also a zero-point because it represented a balance between the greatest will activity and the highest intensification of thoughtful and reflective activities.” Steiner, impressed, showed him that the spectrum of colors is really a circle. “In one stroke he had answered all the questions that I could not even put.”⁷

In his late twenties, van Emmichoven moved to The Hague and started his own practice; by the end of 1927 he opened his Rudolf Steiner Clinic, located between The Hague and Scheveningen. Van Emmichoven’s medical career ran in parallel with his involvement within the Dutch Anthroposophical Society and his lecturing activity, which continued to the end of his life. He soon became accustomed to large audiences.

In his 1923 visit to the Netherlands Steiner had suggested: “Well, then all you need to do is make Dr. Zeylmans free for anthroposophy and offer him a generous salary.”⁸ When van Emmichoven told Steiner that he hesitated in leading the Society, Steiner impressed upon him that “as a doctor, you are particularly fitted to be General Secretary, for the Society will increasingly need the therapeutic aspect.”⁹ When he accepted the task, Steiner warned him against the dangers of sectarianism.

Van Emmichoven had many social skills. He could recognize the qualities of his opponents. He was able to summarize at the end of conferences everything that people had contributed, and therefore was asked to give the concluding address. Son and biographer Emanuel offers the image of the eagle that circles above and sees everything, and he concludes: “Van Emmichoven was a ‘man of the middle,’ someone capable of encompassing and combining the most painful contradictions and oppositions and able to mediate solutions.”¹⁰ He always found the right word to say, and human difficulties melted away in the presence of his genial wisdom. He was exceptionally capable of being all things to all men, yet he always remained eminently himself.” And further: “Everyone felt that he would be able to see the matter from all sides.”¹¹

In looking at his personality, Lievegoed comments “Within the anthroposophical movement, [van Emmichoven] was an original thinker. His whole stature was saturnine, in his face the skeleton dominated. He was a spiritual eagle that hovered far above the earth. With the people to whom he gave his confidence, he had a relationship of deeply hidden warmth and absolute loyalty. In such a relationship, time became something infinite; when you had a profound conversation with him, it could suffice for a couple of years.”¹² Van Emmichoven was a true spiritual investigator who could live with questions for a long time, confident in the help of the

⁶Ibid, 49.

⁷Ibid, 53

⁸Emanuel Zeylmans, *Willem Zeylmans von Emmichoven*, 59.

⁹Ibid, 91.

¹⁰Ibid, 139.

¹¹Ibid, 142.

¹²An Interview with Jelle van der Meulen, *The Eye of the Needle: Bernard Lievegoed*, 34.

spiritual world. On occasion, upon awakening from sleep he would receive pictures, from which he could form inner judgment, and build inner certainty.

We can say that van Emmichoven was a true representative of his stream, the Aristotelian one, as he knew from the recognition of 'former situations,' of which more will be said shortly. And he was also keenly aware of the various paths that can be trod within anthroposophy.

In 1961 van Emmichoven asked Lievegoed to succeed him at the helm of the Dutch Anthroposophical Society, which he had steered for thirty-seven years. To his friend, Lievegoed had already previously said that it would have been difficult to combine his more worldly pursuits with those of the Society, because of the gulf between the tasks. Van Emmichoven replied that he was acting out of the old maxim of giving power to those who were not seeking it. Lievegoed continued to ponder the idea, then saw that it was unavoidable. He could not say no to van Emmichoven.

This important responsibility was offered to Lievegoed a few days after his fifty-sixth birthday. In September 1961, before going to South Africa, van Emmichoven told his friend "I am going to Africa very shortly, and when I return in the New Year I shall resign as Chairman; and I expect you to take over the Chairmanship of the Dutch Society!" As we said before, for Lievegoed this was a shock, and the thought did not appeal to him, mindful as he was of the dimension that politics played in the Dutch Society. Van Emmichoven added "You know, I shall then withdraw [after you take the Chairmanship] and from somewhere up above I shall look down at you, going about things in quite a different way from how I would have approached them! And I shall be pleased to see things done differently!" True to his word, van Emmichoven died six weeks later.¹³

To give us a flavor of the difference between the two doctors, let us look at it through the eyes of Lievegoed. "We were very different people and were conscious of that. He had a strong imaginative life and was able to put deep truths into words. He was also a bit of a loner, he was at his most creative when he was alone with himself. I was more a will person, more oriented towards doing things and flourished especially in cooperation with other people." Lievegoed greatly treasured this key destiny link with his colleague. "Witness what he said on the same occasion: "Willem Zeylmans remained my teacher to the last moment of his life."¹⁴

Bernard J. Lievegoed

Lievegoed was present at a 1926 international pedagogical conference organized by the Dutch anthroposophists. The young man had red hair and a fiery temperament, and looked younger than his age. His fellow students called him "fire-ball." He was introduced to van Emmichoven, then thirty-three, and twelve years his elder. The younger man appreciated that "Despite his young years [van Emmichoven] seemed a mature person." The elder man, hearing what the friends were calling Lievegoed, approached the youth very directly: "Now then, how do things stand with you—will you willingly sacrifice yourself to the dragon...?" Lievegoed was puzzled and moved, and the question kept circling in his mind. He concluded: "During the next months I came to see that I must ask Zeylmans how I might find the way to my own self. That was the beginning of an intimate friendship and pupilship that was to last thirty-five years."¹⁵

¹³Bernard C. J. Lievegoed, *Developing Communities*, 78-79.

¹⁴An Interview with Jelle van der Meulen, *The Eye of the Needle: Bernard Lievegoed; His Life and Working Encounter with Anthroposophy*, 34.

¹⁵Emanuel Zeylmans, *Willem Zeylmans von Emmichoven: An Inspiration for Anthroposophy: A Biography*, 113.

Bernard Cornelis Johannes Lievegoed was born in Medan, on the island of Sumatra, on September 2, 1905. As a child Bernard was used to riding on boats on rivers where alligators roamed; going around almost naked, except for a hat; guiding boats through rapids; going on long mountain hikes and reaching the summits; descending into the crater of a volcano when the weather allowed it; or viewing performances of the Hindu Mahabharata epic cycle.

Lievegoed experienced illnesses and personal losses at key moments in his biography. At age four he developed acute cholera, with high fever and dehydration. Of nine children who contracted the disease, only he and another one survived. The illness left him with paralysis on his right side, and he had to learn to walk again. He recovered almost fully, but maintained a slight disorder of the right arm afterwards, root cause of poor handwriting. As a further consequence, and in spite of his active life, he could not participate in sports because he didn't have good balance. This pushed him to withdraw within himself, and gave him the feeling of being somewhat weaker than others.

As a child, Lievegoed had a recurring dream of a wooden temple on top of a mountain, and he knew that he needed to get up there. He dreamt that he would begin to climb but never reached the top. With heavy building blocks he erected a miniature Greek temple, and kept it atop a table for months and months until his mother removed it. Years later, in relation to his sister being sick, he heard from a family friend in The Hague that in Basel, a temple for the anthroposophists had been built on top of a hill, and that the Catholics had burned it. He commented, when giving interviews for the book: "... during his story the shivers ran over my back, from the top down and from the bottom up."¹⁶ This was his first encounter with anthroposophy, but only later did he understand that the man had been talking about the Goetheanum. He was then eighteen years and seven months old, the time of his first moon node. When Steiner came to Holland in the same year, Lievegoed was busy with his high school exam, and never had another chance to see him. From these circumstances he gathered the feeling of having come too late.

The young man was attracted by the scientific world. Originally he wanted to study electro-technology. For a period he was also interested in chemistry, but was reluctant to spend his life in a factory. The choice of medicine was providential, since it left him free to decide later on a more specific direction.

Lievegoed received his medical degree in 1930. He returned to his studies to complete a doctorate, and wrote a thesis on "Fundamentals of Therapeutic Use of Musical Elements" in 1939.

In 1926 as a student doctor, he went on his first visit to Ita Wegman's clinic in Arlesheim. He felt immediately at home and had his first conversation with his colleague, with whom he had in common the experience of growing up in the East Indies. He was impressed by her personality because she was both most spiritual and very practical. It was after this visit that he decided to join the Anthroposophical Society and soon got involved in the development of the anthroposophical movement in the Netherlands.

Upon meeting with anthroposophy, Lievegoed began a very intensive course of study. He devoted great interest in the qualities of the seven planets and in the concept of development, particularly from *Occult Science* and *True and False Paths in Spiritual Investigation*.

One day Lievegoed had the opportunity of visiting a curative institution in Jena, because he had gone to an anthroposophical meeting and had been assigned to visit a home for

¹⁶Lievegoed, *The Eye of the Needle*, 23.

“backward children.” There he was part of a music appreciation class, and realized how differently things could be done. This was what he called a “coincidence.” He asked the anthroposophist Werner Pache, one of the pioneers of anthroposophical curative education, if this would be possible in the Netherlands, who replied: “Yes, of course - just go and start.”¹⁷

The Jena episode led to the initiative of the Zonnehuis in 1931, the first curative educational institute in the Netherlands for children with special needs. Lievegoed remained the director of the institution until 1954. By the time he established his work with developmentally disabled children, he knew that curative education involved the therapeutic aspect, the lifestyle, the medicines, etc., to which Steiner had made many contributions. But, a whole other realm was that of suitable social forms that would be appropriate for each phase of the organization. Here Steiner had not made direct contributions, since this had not been a question or a felt need when institutions were only in their infant stage. Lievegoed saw that moral technique - the art of translating moral imagination into practical impulses - would be very important in the search for these new social forms. Development and moral technique were to form the two touchstones of his whole work and literary output.

After getting deeply involved in the Dutch Society, the doctor helped give birth to the NPI (Institute for Organizational Development) in 1954 and the Free High School (a one-year course for students preparing for university), and worked at the re-fashioning of the First Class of the Dutch Anthroposophical Society. In addition he wrote numerous books, including *The Developing Organization*; *Phases of Childhood*; *Phases: The Spiritual Rhythms in Adult Life*; and *Man on the Threshold: The Challenge of Inner Development*.

Lievegoed remembers that preceding the important initiative of NPI was an experience, which “arose, by chance, as people say.” The question came out of the surrounding world: “Could I help in a situation where trainees were causing difficulties when they finished their apprenticeship?”¹⁸ Apart from the social conflicts, this was a major financial drain for the firm. Having no previous experience of industrial life, Lievegoed spent a lot of time listening. He does not tell us how the experience ended, but it probably had a positive outcome, since new developments happened in the succeeding years.

Lievegoed continues: “To my great astonishment there then came a request from our University in Rotterdam, from the Faculty of Social Economics, for me to take over a professional chair for Social Psychology, later Social Pedagogy.”¹⁹ It was a completely new field of inquiry and he declined it at first, only to accept it two years later. In 1954 the doctor was involved in the founding of NPI, and became professor of Social Pedagogy at the Netherlands School of Economics in Rotterdam. He accepted, provided he could call it Social Ecology, and that he could teach from experience. The NPI connected with the faculty chair at the School of Economics. The institute was supported by companies such as Shell, Philips, Unilever and AKZO, and it was built from the start as a purely anthroposophical initiative. It was independent from the university, although it had links to it.

NPI made contact with anthroposophy possible when people asked questions about the deeper aspects of its work. Moreover, everyone knew that NPI co-workers were

¹⁷Bernard C. J. Lievegoed, *Developing Communities*, 6.

¹⁸Bernard C. J. Lievegoed, *Developing Communities*, 13.

¹⁹Ibid, 10

anthroposophists. In addition, Lievegoed wanted people who worked for the NPI to anchor the springboard of their vocation in the work of the First Class of Spiritual Science. He wanted anthroposophists to be in touch with the real problems of people and be able to offer something out of anthroposophy. The most important thing was to be able to offer something specific out of a concrete situation. As he would say, “The good always takes place in a situation.”²⁰ In relation to the above Lievegoed further stated, “Therefore, we also picture to ourselves that moral technique and development are very closely connected, and in fact the whole Social-Pedagogical Institute (NPI) was founded on the concept of development.”²¹

Group work can lead organizations to the experience of what Steiner calls their “new group souls.” Here too, Lievegoed’s work had much of a pioneer quality. When groups learn to work together and really listen, a moment can arise in which “the group suddenly becomes interesting for the spiritual world.”²² This will remain so, only as long as these special conditions are preserved. And people should make a point of remembering such moments.

Zeylmans Van Emmichoven and Lievegoed as Mediators

Both Lievegoed and Zeylmans van Emmichoven were good mediators because they could understand the width and breadth of the Foundation Stone Meditation and of the variety of impulses contained within it. Lievegoed could rise to this understanding by apprehending the manifoldness of the human being in the social world; van Emmichoven from the archetypes contained within the Foundation Stone Meditation itself.

Lievegoed was used to the practice of letting spiritual scientific ideas fade in the background, as it were, and to see them re-emerge from experience. He does not refer specifically to streams, such as Aristotelians, Platonists, Rosicrucians, etc. but to paths. He recognizes two paths that encapsulate the strongest polarity and one in between that has a uniting/mediating power. The two, clearly polar, paths he calls:

- a “path through clarity of thought”, through which one can perceive reality more clearly and live according to the insights that are derived from it.
- a “path of intervention in the reality of the world through the will, in which man initiates, works and is effective.”²³

Referring to the first two paths Lievegoed concludes: “Thus we have on the one hand the path of the individual who strives mentally, and on the other, the path of the individual who works socially into the earthly foundation process.”²⁴ Taking the example of philosophical matters, pertaining to the first path, Lievegoed points out that here things must be precisely defined. Contrasting this to the second path he comments “However, in the social realm ... one will make no progress in such a way; it is impossible and would be a violation of social life. It leads to an overly strict and inappropriate application of principles in which the drive to form [of the cultural sphere] takes precedence over the living reality.”²⁵ The above basic attitude is, according to Lievegoed, important in the path of the will, the second path, “for will-impulses conflict with each

²⁰Bernard J. Lievegoed, *Towards the Twenty-First Century: Doing the Good*, 66.

²¹Lievegoed, *Developing Communities*, 16.

²²Ibid, 85.

²³Ibid, 117.

²⁴Ibid, 118.

²⁵Ibid,120.

other most drastically of all.”²⁶

The path of the will is one that cannot be taken on one’s own; it is the path of community. This is the path that brings us to karmic groups and enables us “to compensate for one another’s deficiencies, where each person’s Intuition is protected by the others.”²⁷ In these Mysteries we can decide to form a karmic group, not out of the past, but in view of the future. However, nobody can make progress on this path if they do not make progress on the other path [the path through clarity of thought]. And he judges that the reverse is true and that nobody on the individual [cognitive] path will make progress unless they work socially and deliberately with others in listening to what is needed from the future, and sensing what is coming from our pre-birth intentions. Here Lievegoed shows himself in agreement with van Emmichoven’s repeated assertion, in his book *The Anthroposophical Understanding of the Human Soul*, that the soul works as a unity, meaning that all its processes need to be honored to attain a state of balance and health.

In between the two paths, Lievegoed places the “path of soul-perception”, which is also the artistic way. One who walks this path feels pain whenever a concept becomes fixed. He is also unable to participate in intellectually-clever conversations. For a person who follows primarily this path, the soul always experiences new situations, which are fully justified for the individual. In addition, in the soul, each person is unique. One can sense that a lot more could be said about this important, mediating, third path, but Lievegoed did not expand further.

The theme of the Christmas Foundation Meeting and the Foundation Stone Meditation occupied van Emmichoven for many years, and he gave numerous lectures about it. He was in fact one of the first anthroposophists to draw attention to Steiner’s use of the rhythms of the Foundation Stone Meditation. He had meditated on them since 1923. It is worth quoting him at length from his biography, written by his son and biographer: “Practise spirit remembering’ (spirit recollection) not only means that we learn how ‘our own ‘I’ is part of God’s ‘I’ – no, out of cosmic heights we hear resound: ‘From the divine, humanity takes its existence’, the humanity together with which we must come to a brotherly, social community. Thus ‘Practise spirit reflection’ (spirit mindfulness) is a path of schooling for meeting the being of Christ, the cosmic ego, the ‘I’ of humanity, to which in the far-distant future all human beings can find their free relationship. The third task set us, ‘Practise spirit vision’ (spirit beholding), is ultimately the path from natural science to spiritual science, from anthropology to anthroposophy.”²⁸

Notice that van Emmichoven recognizes in spirit remembering (spirit recollection) the path leading to “a brotherly social community.” In his book on the Foundation Stone, van Emmichoven further elaborates on this theme and refers to one of the first exercises in *Knowledge of Higher Worlds*: looking back over the day’s experiences as a spectator. Then he refers to other exercises, such as looking back at particular phases of one’s life, concluding “it should really be possible, after several years of these exercises, to look back on one’s whole life as a detached observer.”²⁹

For van Emmichoven spirit recollection was enhanced through a certain natural

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid, 147.

²⁸Emanuel Zeylmans, *Willem Zeylmans von Emmichoven: An Inspiration for Anthroposophy. A biography*, 249.

²⁹F. W. Zeylmans van Emmichoven, *The Foundation Stone*, 42-43.

clairvoyance. On December 17, 1920 van Emmichoven heard Steiner lecturing on the first of three lectures on “The Bridge between Universal Spirituality and the Physical Constitution of Man.” When Steiner appeared, a clear experience of recognition emerged in his soul, accompanied by a whole series of images, vaguely recalling “former situations.” One of his recollections may have been, as he later confided to his most trusted friends, that of his incarnation as Ptolemy Lagides, one of Alexander the Great’s most trusted generals, who became ruler of Egypt (323-283 BC), and founder of the Ptolemaic Dynasty. Ptolemy’s life was one of continuous action and adventure. He accompanied Alexander during his earliest Asian campaigns, and was one of the major protagonists in the later Afghanistan and India campaigns.³⁰

At the center of spirit mindfulness, van Emmichoven places everything of the nature of meditation. It centers around meditation itself but is also much more. On one hand, it means recognition of the laws of destiny, through which the individual can feel his own I in the World-Ego of Christ. On the other hand, it addresses the study of anthroposophy, which can start to acquire a more meditative quality, and become more than reading with the head.³¹ Finally, Spirit Beholding is “The whole path of knowledge which Rudolf Steiner described... and, indeed the whole of anthroposophy, is a path of spiritual practice.”³² In effect, in mentioning the practices, van Emmichoven has outlined cognitively the very same different attitudes that Lievegoed derives from experience.

Both Lievegoed and van Emmichoven fulfilled some of the express wishes of Rudolf Steiner in the Netherlands. Their spiritual master had warned against sectarianism in the Society, and neither doctor could ever be accused of it. Steiner had also indicated that the Society would increasingly need the therapeutic aspect for its work; and van Emmichoven, a doctor and great diplomat, passed the baton to another doctor with specific social therapeutic skills. Not surprisingly, it was from the Dutch Society, and more specifically from van Emmichoven, that arose the possibility of healing the rift that had been opened with the expulsions of prominent anthroposophists and sections of national societies from the Anthroposophical Society in 1935. Lievegoed supported the elder doctor’s efforts of reconciliation.

Zeylmans van Emmichoven attended everything that happened in Dornach between December 23, 1923 and January 9, 1924. He was one of the first to realize the crucial importance of the Christmas Meeting and of the Foundation Stone Meditation.

In 1935 van Emmichoven, Ita Wegman and many others were expelled from the General Anthroposophical Society. Lievegoed reveals that van Emmichoven had a heart attack in the train leaving Dornach, and that he suffered deeply under this tragedy. Lievegoed saw him as an eagle with clipped wings. For van Emmichoven had reason to feel wounded. He believed that: “What Rudolf Steiner meant with the Christmas meeting of 1923 is now going to be delayed for decades.”³³ Lievegoed himself, at that point, felt that the worldwide Society had lost its right to speak on the world arena. The anthroposophical movement in Dornach further split around the personalities of Albert Steffen and Marie Steiner. Van Emmichoven countered this trend by writing

³⁰See more about this in Luigi Morelli, *Aristotelians and Platonists: A Convergence of the Michaelic Streams in Our Time*, Chapter 7.

³¹F. W. Zeylmans van Emmichoven, *The Foundation Stone*, 44.

³²Ibid, 45.

³³An Interview with Jelle van der Meulen, *The Eye of the Needle: Bernard Lievegoed*, 46.

a booklet entitled “Development and Spiritual Conflict.”

After the events of 1935 van Emmichoven dedicated much of his life to healing the rift that had occurred within the Anthroposophical Society. In 1948 he tried different ways to approach Dornach. Emil Bock, who was also attempting the same, had conceived the plan of a “Friendship Conference” that would gather a small number of friends to discuss the world situation, and how it needed to be addressed. Through the efforts of van Emmichoven and Karl König fourteen participants convened in June of 1948. They came from the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom, and one from America. They spent a week together, occupying the first three days with a study of the Arnhem *Karmic Relationships* lectures that Steiner had offered in 1924. After that, other Dornach members were invited to join, and in the last day and a half the Executive Committee of the Goetheanum itself. Progress took the form of collaboration between lower-level groups in the respective countries. A conversation also took place in December 1948, but it was marred by Marie Steiner’s death, which caused a bit of disarray. On New Year’s Eve van Emmichoven gave a lecture; then a small group of fifteen people worked together for three days. The theme of the Christmas Foundation Meeting and its impulse was the thread that united them.

The initial group enlarged, and it supported the Dutch summer conferences in the following years. This culminated in a 1953 European conference, held in The Hague and attended by 1,200 people. The chosen theme was “The Birth of Europe: A Spiritual Question.” There was a conference the following summer, but nothing of import occurred until 1960. At that stage Lievegoed actively encouraged his elder friend to seek a mandate from the members of the Dutch Anthroposophical Society to reunite with the G. A. S. in Dornach. Van Emmichoven took the last steps in order to ensure that reconciliation would happen.

In a letter of September 1959 (presumably addressed to the Goetheanum Vorstand) he announced: “If we [Dutch Anthroposophical Society] are ready to reintegrate with the General Anthroposophical Society, this is because we believe the time is pressing, and that we ought at least to make our contribution to building up a General Anthroposophical Society which deserves the name ‘General’ because it includes all who see themselves as honest students of Rudolf Steiner.” At the Annual General Meeting the following year on Easter Saturday, April 16, 1960, he amended this slightly to “and if people should ask us why we are reintegrating with the General Anthroposophical Society, we can only give one reply: because we wish and have the will to!”³⁴ Van Emmichoven had accomplished one of his most important tasks just before dying. We have seen that in his efforts van Emmichoven was supported by other individuals who wanted to promote healing impulses. Noticeable among them were the personalities of Karl König, another doctor and of Emil Bock, a priest. We will now turn to the individual who was uniquely placed by karma in the position to play the most important role of reconciliation within the worldwide General Anthroposophical Society - Dr. Ita Wegman.

Ita Wegman

Ita Wegman was born in Krawang, sixty kilometers east of Jakarta, in Java, on February 22, 1876, almost exactly fifteen years after Steiner. Her given name was Maria, and she was the firstborn.

Wegman lived her early days in an environment that had known practically all the religions of humanity. She grew up playing with native children, speaking Malayan with them, and eating

³⁴ Emanuel Zeylmans, *Willem Zeylmans von Emmichoven*, 248-49.

their food. She was very energetic, self-confident, and talented for organization and leadership. She seldom played with dolls or toys, and was an unusual child. While she used to organize games for others, she did not play herself. As a child she scrutinized her parents' acquaintances from head to toe, before opening up to them. Although easily prone to fits of rage, she had a happy, sunny disposition. At school she was a good and ambitious student. Among other things, she had a prodigious memory. She busied herself and read books, preferably of history, and very much enjoyed physical activity, loved horseback riding and any kind of adventure in nature.

Her downfall came from her choleric temperament, which could erupt unexpectedly. Her inexact communication caused misunderstandings, and her interference in human relations could make her seem tactless. In her years in Zurich, she was known as the "black panther," and during that time she mentioned she had enemies.

Later in life, Wegman displayed a natural talent for organization, finance, and fundraising. Overall, she lived in action, rather than in ideas, and had a sense for working with people. Rudolf Steiner called her a "person of the deed." Not surprisingly, she wrote little and gave very few public lectures. However, her speech had strength and influence on others. Her talents lay in starting initiatives, and encouraging and supporting others in their professional choices. In her work as a doctor, she had what Steiner called the "courage to heal."

Around 1894 in Java, Wegman had become a friend of Henny Steinbuch, from whom she took singing and piano lessons. Steinbuch was the one who eased Wegman's introduction to Theosophy. At age twenty-one, Wegman became a vegetarian and chose an independent professional life. She studied physical therapy, therapeutic gymnastics, and massage, and in 1902 passed her exam in physical education, which allowed her to teach it in high schools. After completing her studies she left for Berlin, where she probably pursued her training in various methods of physiotherapy, Swedish massage, and hydrotherapy. During these years Wegman accumulated quite a bit of knowledge in anatomy and physiology.

In the spring of 1905, Wegman moved to Zurich, and remained there until 1920. In September 1905 she was accepted in the Sravaka Order of the Esoteric School of the Theosophical Society, as a letter of Steiner indicates. She was part of it until 1908 when she was accepted into a higher class. In letters from that time Wegman wrote to Steiner to ask how she could balance her inner life with the demands of university studies. In 1917 she completed her studies of gynaecology and opened a private practice in Zurich.

With the benefit of esoteric discipline, Wegman developed a very high capacity for empathy. Steiner said she had forces of medical inspiration and intuition. "She could live into the symptoms of an illness so intensively that she could take Dr. Steiner's indications as self-understood."³⁵ Eventually, she mastered, to a degree, the temper that would occasionally flare up even in the later years, especially in the light of the many unjustified attacks. Such was the transformation that Wegman could talk with people of different opinions by first familiarizing herself with their ideas and without antagonizing them. She would not dwell on differences or get stuck in fruitless criticism. What conflicts remained usually led to deeper encounters and stronger connections.

Overall, Wegman was definitely a person of the deed; through her the Clinic in Arlesheim came into being, as well as the Haus Sonnenhof, a therapeutic home for mentally handicapped children, the Arlesheim Clinic's annexes in Ascona and Brissago, and the medical centers in Paris, London, and Berlin. In addition, she helped design training courses, create laboratories

³⁵ J. E. Zeylmans von Emmichoven, *Who Was Ita Wegman: a Documentation, Volume I: 1876:1925*, 88.

and organize public conferences.

Rudolf Steiner was in the habit of encouraging the practice of spirit recollection among his closest pupils. Ita Wegman awoke only gradually through it to the recognition of her personal links with Steiner. After all, she had been present to his eternal individuality in all known incarnations. Her progress was fraught with many steps backwards. After years of receiving support, Wegman began to become available to Steiner. On New Year's Day 1923, with others, she formed a committee for the reconstruction of the Goetheanum, asking her acquaintances for financial help.

After a meeting on May 27, 1923 at the Villa Hansi, she wrote in her notes: "From that moment on I knew that Rudolf Steiner was my teacher, is my teacher, and will be my teacher in the future."⁽¹¹⁾ In April 1925 another journal entry reads: "A few months after the fire, the karmic connections between the doctor and myself were revealed to me."⁽¹²⁾ This was an enhancement of something that she had already realized in 1905, but was not able to act on at the time. Much karmic residue needed to be burned off, particularly from her incarnation as Alexander the Great, before Wegman recovered the place at Steiner's side that was hers to play by virtue of world karma. Other steps followed.

In the summer of 1923, Steiner went to England and Wales, where he had the occasion to address a group of physicians. Ita Wegman was able to attend sometime after August 23 or 24, and joined the course at Penmaenmawr from the seventh lecture onward. Wegman was disappointed by the courses. She asked Steiner if medicine could become what it was at the time of the Mysteries. It seems she had become ever more conscious of the link that united her to Steiner from previous lives. Steiner did not answer Wegman's question immediately. When he did, he told her that "Mystery medicine shall come to life again." That year, after lectures held in Vienna, Steiner mentioned to people that he was going to write a book with Wegman. The latter, unaware of it, overheard him. In fact Steiner hoped to be able to collaborate for several volumes, rather than the single one that actually proved possible.

The collaboration leading to *Fundamentals of Therapy* was an unprecedented event in the scientific field. Steiner spent mornings in the studio exploring the themes of the book on the basis of the medical cases they had explored together. In the evenings, when Wegman came to the studio, he described to her the results of his research on a particular theme. Wegman then formulated in her words the particular chapter and summarized the content. Her part was more practical, deriving from what emerged from her experience with the patients, and the way she was able to formulate it in the scientific terms with which she was familiar, given her education. Thus, the research and themes were generated by Steiner; Wegman would let it all grow in her soul and set it down in a preliminary form; and he would further elaborate. The new Mysteries were abolishing the strict boundaries between teacher and pupil. Wegman, who had been a pupil in her previous incarnations, was now becoming a full collaborator with Steiner.

In the year 1923, Steiner was undecided about whether to start an International Society with his direct involvement, or a limited Order of Anthroposophy. He seems to have discussed the matter with Wegman too. On November 17, in the Hague, Wegman exclaimed: "But, Dr. Steiner, you can't abandon the Society. You told me this summer how you were thinking of building up the Society under your leadership." Thereupon Dr. Steiner stood up, went to her, took her hands and

said with warmth and depth, “Yes, Dr. Wegman, if you help me I will dare it!”³⁶ Steiner had pondered about founding the Society and leading it with the help of Marie Steiner, but she had not been ready. Her health at the time was too precarious.

Before the crisis that tragically affected the General Anthroposophical Society in the years 1933 to 1935 - followed by her expulsion from the Vorstand - Wegman had covered important milestones: she had recognized her karmic connection with Steiner and the incarnations that linked them; she had asked the question about the renewal of medicine, which had led to the collaboration on *Fundamentals of Therapy*; and she had asked the question leading to the renewal of the Mysteries and the Christmas Conference.

Wegman also realized in retrospect that, although she had acted selflessly to defend Steiner’s heritage, she had not always done it in an effective way. We could say she lacked moral technique – as described in her appraisal by Peter Selg: “[she] was aware of having behaved in some ways too quickly and decisively after 1925, with too much will and too little circumspection, albeit - despite all allegations - with the best of selfless intentions.”³⁷

The year 1933 marked the beginning of the crisis. The Annual General Meeting, which was announced for March 27 and 28, included a motion seeking change in the statutes and awarding the signing of the membership cards to Albert Steffen alone.

Before the meeting was called Wegman fell ill. She knew by then that the tensions accumulated over the years went well beyond any possibility of mediation. What was to prove a “providential illness” of unknown cause, worsened as the AGM approached.³⁸ That this was accompanied with despondency and resignation is clear from a letter written on March 9: “I almost sense a desire rising in me no longer to have anything to do with this false Society. No longer is there any good will to be found in it, but instead an intentional distortion of reality.”³⁹

Nevertheless, Wegman found the strength to write to Steffen to state her position against the motion to be introduced at the AGM. Predictably, the motion was passed by an overwhelming majority. Wegman’s health deteriorated further to the point where her life was threatened. Later on, it appears, this was ‘neuralgia’ so severe that “it was impossible for [Wegman] either to speak or work.”⁴⁰

Eventually, her improvement was preceded by a spiritual experience: an encounter with Rudolf Steiner at the side of Christ, which revealed to her that she still had an unfinished task on earth.⁴¹ Henceforth she gained the strength to take her recovery in hand.

Wegman clearly felt that the Christmas Conference had been nullified. Originally it was based on a constellation of key individuals, through whom people in the various streams could find access to anthroposophy. Upon this lay the importance for Steiner of creating a Vorstand (governance) body, which he knew was fraught with tensions, but which nevertheless recognized the need to encompass all the streams that worked with Michael and Christ for the furthering of civilization on earth.

³⁶ Ibid, 146: unpublished manuscript quoted by Zeylmans van Emmichoven, *Who Was Ita Wegman: a Documentation, Volume I*. See note p. 250 for the source.

³⁷ Peter Selg, *Spiritual Resistance: Ita Wegman, 1933-1935*, 149.

³⁸ For a full account of illness written down by Wegman see Peter Selg, *Spiritual Resistance*, notes pp. 231-233.

³⁹ Ibid, 67.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 165.

⁴¹ Ibid, 81-83. See more about the experience, 159-60.

Wegman resolved after her spiritual experience to resist the urge to create a new Society. Focusing on the spiritual tenor of human connections, and without creating new external forms, she was both able to accept the very grim reality all around her and declare nevertheless “My heart still beats joyfully...”⁴²

Wegman’s recovery had already taken place away from Dornach, in Ascona. From there she knew it was not time yet to return to Dornach. The doctor realized that in order to regain strength from the illness she needed to take distance from the recent tragic events. She accomplished this goal with a series of interrelated steps in what outwardly appears solely as a vacation, or time of convalescence. She decided to travel to Italy (Venice and later Capri and Rome), Istanbul and Palestine.

The decision to visit Palestine was deeply connected with her Christ experience. It was potentized through the possibility of reading Emil Bock’s notes on the Christ event (which later became part of his books). These allowed her to see the polarities at work in the geography of Palestine and in the individuals working around Christ in his three-year ministry. Deepening the Christ impulse allowed her to carry her own cross joyfully. Moreover, and just as importantly, she was reconnecting with the Greek culture and with her previous incarnations, most importantly the one of Alexander the Great.

About her traveling, Wegman tells us: “The verse ‘Practice Spirit Recollection,’ which Steiner gave us at the Christmas Foundation Meeting, really is true. One can practice this on a journey; and so a trip of this kind becomes, more than recuperation, a voyage of knowledge and increasing insight, so that traveling itself acquires a greater purpose.”⁴³ She repeats this later: “It is true that by traveling one can really practice the Christmas Foundation Stone verse ‘Practice Spirit Recollection.’ In this sense my convalescence vacation was also a journey of deepening insight.”⁴⁴

Though not detailed by Selg, we know that spirit recollection was one of her goals in her journeys. In a letter to van Emmichoven, Wegman wrote about her extensive journey through Greece, two or three years earlier: “For me, the finest experience was to let the landscape of each Mystery site work on me in such a way that one could recall that Aristotle, Plato, Alexander had seen the same landscape and found great joy in their beauty. Thus the present started to fall away, and one could live completely into ancient times, could experience Ptolemy’s enthusiasm for the great Cabiri spirits to which he gave expression in his Ptolemy temple, whose foundations and pillars still lie around, as well as in the Arsineium. And it made a strange impression on me to read, in Greek, on a great gable stone, the clear words: “Here Ptolemy and Veronica honor the great Cabiri.”⁴⁵ Notice here the insistence on Ptolemy, a general of Alexander the Great. Wegman was knowingly referring to the individual with whom van Emmichoven knew himself united in the course of time.

About her effort of spirit recollection, Wegman also says immediately before the quotes given above: “The wealth of experiences I was granted has been hugely valuable for my further path.”⁴⁶ You can gain the feeling that she saw and/or reflected upon her Alexander incarnation, and did not mention these experiences - far too controversial at the time - and gained detachment

⁴² Ibid, 91.

⁴³ Ibid, 134.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 136.

⁴⁵ F. W. Zeylmans van Emmichoven, *The Anthroposophical Understanding of the Human Soul*, 238.

⁴⁶ Peter Selg, *Spiritual Resistance: Ita Wegman, 1933-1935*, 133.

and empathic understanding for problems she had helped to create in an incarnation that led to her premature death. The above is also candidly confirmed in a letter to W. J. Stein: "It is my karma to stand at the very center of these things, [accusations, allegations, attacks] and also to be the focus of all attacks."⁴⁷

The transformation effect of this healing journey was already visible by the following Christmas when in a letter Wegman wrote: "There is still conflict in Dornach no doubt, but I am no longer in the least bothered about this. For me, conflict and battle in the physical world are maya. Spiritually things look very different, and I adhere to this spiritual stance and arrange my life with a sense of faithful connection to Rudolf Steiner."⁴⁸

In seeing the hatred coming towards her she judged: "I, too, believe that those who find such degrees of hatred within them are not the originators of it, but that powers stand behind them who are working to weaken the Anthroposophical Society."⁴⁹ And further: "This is how I see it: spiritual beings need nourishment, a spiritual nourishment that only human souls can give them, which can proceed from a particular inner stance, one which contains selfless will for sacrifice. If souls *can affirm* the severe trials that come toward them, then this can result in positive effects for the future."⁵⁰

After the providential illness, the spiritual experience and the extensive traveling allowing the distancing and gaining of perspective, the test came when the doctor received the Memorandum written, in great part, against her in 1935. She recalled: "When I picked up this memorandum, my heart started racing a little and the thought surfaced in me - 'Now you will be tested as to how you react to this attack.' However, I myself was very surprised indeed after reading it to find that I felt nothing at all. I was neither angry nor sad. The whole thing was alien to me. I found that I had distanced myself entirely from the matters dealt with in the Memorandum. I was extremely pleased at this, and see that it concludes ten years of suffering, and that my illness had also played a part in this."⁵¹

Ita Wegman did much more than withholding herself from conflict. She also literally created a space in her heart where others could meet and bridges could be created. "Slowly, very slowly, one has to rebuild things - perhaps this can only happen in the heart - so that this vessel [the Anthroposophical Society or what would replace it] arises in purity again."⁵² This is the new place where she could arrive at, thanks to her work of spirit recollection.

Writing to the biologist Poppelbaum, who attacked her at the time, Wegman expresses that she wants to hold in her heart the image of who he really is, rather than the person who is presently attacking her. And mentioning a spiritual union between people in order to prevent a split in the Society she explains her effort of "... offering a place for those who do not wish to ally themselves with any party."⁵³ This also meant fully accepting those who were allied to parties. Part of this opening one's heart is "to take this tragedy upon oneself, at the same time maintaining a clear, spiritual protest, and through quiet, fruitful work in smaller groups prepare for the new

⁴⁷ Ibid, 165; see also note p. 262.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 142-43.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 161.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 170-71. Wegman also wrote "I have the feeling that these things are inevitable, a matter of destiny, and so I am tranquil and await what is spiritually intended." (Ibid, 162).

⁵¹ Ibid, 169.

⁵² Ibid, 158.

⁵³ Ibid, 258.

situations that must eventually emerge.”⁵⁴

When her friends rallied around her from England, Holland and Germany, there was an intention of giving anthroposophy an alternative form to the one existing in Dornach, and placing Steiner’s mantle upon her shoulders. She did not feel comfortable with it. She steered a middle course, not out of compromise or weakness, but out of the attitude of the one who listens inwardly to what the spirit is calling her to be and consequently to do, an act of true inspiration.

We owe to the efforts of people like van Emmichoven and Lievegoed that the Anthroposophical Society preserved its unity, and most of all to the spiritual exertion of Ita Wegman.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 267.