

WORLD GOODWILL Seminar

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Freedom and Spiritual Security

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OPENING ADDRESS – Dominic Dibble

Good afternoon and welcome to the World Goodwill Seminar on *Freedom and Spiritual Security*. I know there are some people here who have never attended one of our meetings before, so by way of introduction, World Goodwill was founded in 1932 by Alice Bailey, and its purpose is to establish right human relations through the use of the **power** of goodwill. In our regular newsletters and other literature, we examine the various challenges facing humanity from a spiritual angle, seeking to identify the ways in which the many groups and individuals who are expressing goodwill throughout the world are helping to ground in human consciousness the vision of a world of unity, justice and peace. We regard this positive upliftment of consciousness as crucial, which is why we emphasise meditation as an important service technique.

Now you may have noticed that I referred to the **power** of goodwill, which requires a little explanation, since there may be a tendency to see goodwill as something ineffective, as a passive kindliness or sentimental attitude.

From our perspective, goodwill is concerned with holding right attitudes; but it is much more than an attitude, and it is certainly not ineffective or negative. It is a positive and dynamic energy. It is, in fact, an expression of “the will to that which is good”, or more simply, the will-to-good, which is a purposeful energy which can be used effectively by those who are working for human progress.

What connects goodwill and the will-to-good to Freedom will become clearer when we look a bit later at the exercise of the will in democracy, more particularly within a form of democracy called “strong democracy”.

Before we do that, it would be helpful to clarify a crucial phrase in our theme for the day, namely, “spiritual security”; and to do that, we need to give a working definition of “spiritual”. What World Goodwill means by “spiritual” could be roughly described as “everything which is in line with the purposeful evolution of the human spirit towards its highest Ideals.” It is therefore an ongoing, never-ending process, as Ideals are continuously refined. Using this definition, what does “spiritual security” mean? It means that the individual’s highest vision of how to live - in political, religious and cultural terms - can be secured: in other words, that vision is, at least in principle, **possible**. How that vision might be realised in **practice** vitally depends on the degree of freedom within the society where the individual lives. So reflecting upon the degree of freedom now available to us, and on how Freedom may be expanded, is the next step to consider.

One way of assessing the degree of freedom in a society is to look at how many of the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are available to all its members. We might say that Freedom (in the singular, and with a capital ‘F’), is the spiritual Ideal which humanity is constantly striving towards; while rights and freedoms (plural) are the historical results of the working out of that Ideal. Or more succinctly, Freedom IS, while rights are achieved.

The contemporary importance of seriously reflecting on the prevalence of rights within societies cannot be denied. There are not just the examples of the Arab Spring - every nation can look to events within its borders. Here in the UK, to name just three recent events connected with human rights, we can cite the eviction of travellers at Dale Farm, the “Occupy” protest camp at St Paul’s, and the scandal of illegal phone hacking. These events may cause us to wonder whether we take our rights somewhat for granted. Here are some words from the leader of the pro-democracy movement in Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi, which may give us pause for thought:

“What is this freedom that is our passion? Our most passionate dissidents are not overly concerned with academic theories of freedom.

If pressed to explain what the word means to them, they would most likely reel off a list of the concerns nearest to their hearts such as there won't be any more political prisoners, or there will be freedom of speech and information and association, or we can choose the kind of government we want, or simply, and sweepingly, we will be able to do what we want to do.

This may all sound naïve, perhaps dangerously naïve, but such statements reflect the sense of freedom as **something concrete that has to be gained through practical work**, not just as a concept to be captured through philosophical argument." (**emph. added**) Note again this idea of the working out of freedom in practical terms.

We're now going to take quite a close look at the ideas of Benjamin Barber on "strong democracy". As its name suggests, this is an attempt to work out ways of **strengthening** democracy, of making it a more faithful reflection of the spiritual Ideal of Freedom. A key dimension of "strong democracy" is that it asks, or rather expects of individuals, a much more active and dynamic participation in the processes of securing and maintaining their rights. Barber's theory seems to be suggesting that human rights should not be treated as if they are fixed and immutable, somehow given from on high at the founding of a society, but that human rights are more like a description of how all citizens would or should relate to each other and to the state in a perfect society, which has to be reached through continuous **mutual** effort. Thus, instead of the state being a **static entity** (separate from citizens), which forms the background within which individuals selfishly struggle to have their rights recognised, instead the state is, in some important sense, **all of us** and its dynamic evolution is the foreground of our lives in which we are mutually cooperating to realise rights for **all**. In this perspective, **demanding** that your rights should be recognised by appealing to a legal formulation of them (e.g. in the UK, the Human Rights Act) could be seen as a passive act of selfish consumerism. Instead, the thought is that your rights should be recognised as emerging from your efforts as a citizen to act freely in cooperation with others in order to achieve the common good - they are actively earned.

To illustrate this point, let's try out a thought-experiment. Imagine a society in which the right to vote was only granted to individuals who had engaged in some form of civic participation - perhaps in local politics, perhaps through completing a course of national service. Then, those who, for whatever reason, decide not to contribute to society, would have no active say in its evolving purpose. Clearly, such an innovation would have to be carefully designed to allow those with disabilities of different kinds to find ways of engaging in civic participation - this point in turn suggests that finding ways to productively employ effort and talent of all kinds should be an essential goal of politics.

Now whether you agree with the premise of this thought-experiment or not, trying it out does help to bring into focus the fact that the right to vote is something that tends to be taken for granted in those countries where it is now present, yet which has only been achieved by centuries of principled struggle. Would it really be so terrible for those of us who have been granted the right simply by the accident of where and when we've been born to be expected to put in a little effort to maintain the right? Perhaps, having worked to earn it, we would value our vote more, and this would help to overcome some of the apathy towards voting which is seeping into political life.

Barber makes a number of significant recommendations for participative ways to strengthen democracy. So, for example, he is a strong believer in the importance of "common talk". He discusses mechanisms to make this possible at some length, but in summary he means structures and processes that allow all citizens to contribute their thoughts on important local and national issues. This common talk will help strengthen political judgement, for, as he says, "Political judgement, by which we mean political seeing, is not subjective, because it arises out of social interaction and out of **the imaginative effort by individuals to see in common.**" (*Strong Democracy* p.171 **emph. added**)

This common seeing is facilitated by mutual listening. Barber describes the depth of this process as follows: "‘I will listen’ means to the strong democrat not that I will scan my adversary’s position for weaknesses and potential trade-offs, nor even... that I will tolerantly permit him to say whatever he chooses. It means rather, ‘I will put myself in his place, I will try to understand, I will strain to hear what makes us alike, I will listen for a common rhetoric evocative of a common purpose or a common good.’" (*op. cit.* p.175) Another way of saying this might be simply - I will approach my fellow citizens with goodwill. He further notes, "one measure of healthy political talk is the amount of *silence* it permits and encourages, for silence is the precious medium in which reflection is nurtured and empathy can grow." (*ibid.*) Now one of the major disciplines of any spiritual path is necessarily concerned with right speech and right silence, for this signifies the amount of control one has over one’s consciousness. Can we imagine future political debates which begin with a period of silence, and which allow for silences in response to speech - not silences of evasion or confusion, but silences of considered reflection, silences which say more eloquently than any clever talk, "I hear you and am pondering how it relates to my position"?

For Barber, the intention is that, out of this common listening and common talk will emerge a common **will**. Alice Bailey makes the interesting related observation that one of the principles which will condition the atmosphere of thought in the coming era is the Principle of Unanimity. Barber notes: "To will is to create a world or to bring about events in a world, and this act entails (and thus defines) power - the ability to create or modify reality... In treating decision-making as an activity of the will, strong democrats honor the tradition of Rousseau and Kant, for whom the aim was not to choose common ends or to discover common interests but to will a common world by generating a common will. Legitimacy here is awarded...to...the will that incarnates a democratic community that is comprised in turn of the wills of autonomous citizens." (*op. cit.* p.200) This process, of moving from a world of selfish competing interests - a world of "mes"- to a common, unanimous will, a "we", means accepting in advance that the individual or sub-group will not necessarily receive everything they want, and that this is a **strength** of the process. The idea of **sacrifice** is thus built in. Barber illustrates this point by the following example: "I may **want** a big, fast... automobile, but I may not be prepared to will into existence a world with polluted air, concrete landscapes, depleted energy resources, and gruesome highway death tolls; and so **as a citizen** I may act contrary to my private preferences." (*op. cit.* p.201 *emph. added*) This emphasis upon "will" in strong democracy underlines how important it is that this should be a **good** will, a will aimed at the **common good**.

Finally, this will towards the common good is grounded in common action. As Barber notes, "...the strong democrat understands that while politics begins with conflict and uncertainty, it always ends with what we may call the consensus of action - with a decision that is singular and historically determinative, however conflicted and plural was the process of arriving at it. Out of the diversity of the process comes the unity of the deed." (*op. cit.* p.162) Barber believes in the importance of common action, common work at both the local and the national level. Again, Alice Bailey echoes this thought in her suggestion that the Law of Group Endeavour will be an important factor in future. Of such common work projects, Barber says "They make communities more self-sufficient and thus more self-governing and build a genuine sense of community in the neighborhood." (*op. cit.* p.211) He also foresees that, through processes like a referendum, another type of common work could help re-shape legislation. He goes into some detail on the referendum process, which would be quite lengthy, allowing for the expression of a range of opinions, and for a period of reflection on possible outcomes before a final decision is made. Such a process may sound rather dry, reminiscent perhaps of the proceedings of UN international conferences, taking place through days of debate and drafting and re-drafting. But really what the delegates to such conferences are doing is very similar to the work which Barber foresees for all citizens - seeking to arrive at a united will, so that they may create powerful instruments for the channelling of future thought and action.

Common will, common talk, common work - in all these ways, Barber presents an inspiring vision of active participants in society, free men and women who actively create and sustain the conditions of their own freedom. The detailed working out of a programme of strong democracy may lie somewhere in the future. But one key point we can take from Barber’s programme is that **active participation, active engagement**

with the political process, is a duty for any individual who aspires to be a free citizen of a civilised society. Also, it is as we engage in this work as a **common** task that we help to mutually secure our rights, and the rights of our fellow citizens.

In conclusion, turning briefly from a focus on individuals to nations, if we construe the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a target towards which every nation aspires, then we can see how the idea of a world society is something that can only really come about when every nation has reached that goal. For if there is no fundamental conflict between any nation's legal implementation of rights, then the way is clear for a global implementation. But for this to happen, human beings everywhere have to be convinced of the importance of rights, and have actively struggled to realise them - imposing them from on high would be counter-productive. We might therefore construct, by analogy with the famous Boddhisattva vow to remain behind until all sentient beings have reached enlightenment, a Boddhisattva vow for nations: I vow not to enter into a global unity of nations until every nation has successfully realised human rights and implemented them in its legal code. Thus, every nation which has advanced further along this path has the duty to help other nations who, for whatever reason, lag behind. In our current world situation, this highlights the special obligation which the democracies have towards those which are slowly emerging - most notably now in the Arab world. As the revolutions in the Arab world show, citizens across the region are ready to take on the common responsibility of working to create societies in which human rights are more effectively realised.



FREEDOM AND WORLD ADVANCEMENT – Rev. Peter van Breda

Peter van Breda has worked as a priest for the last 35 years, in Germany, South Africa and the UK. He encountered the work of Rudolf Steiner in the late sixties, and since that time has been an avid student of Anthroposophy. He is convinced that the future of all civilisation depends on the degree to which science, art and religion can find a fruitful balance, and that this balance can only be found when the true picture of man is re-established out of an understanding of the spirit that dwells in us and through us.

I would like to begin by making a statement which is true in a way that I think Dominic pointed to, that what is at stake today in the world is the whole future evolution of humanity. At the centre of this future stands the human being; and upon the shoulders of every one of us, the future rests. We may ask, what is this *homo sapiens*, this being whom we call man? And there might be many descriptions; we could say he is threefold in nature. He is born out of the Spirit, sent down out of the world of Spirit down to this Earth. He takes up an abode here, a life on Earth. He has feelings, he can contemplate and think, he has the will to do. He lives with a past, with a present, and with a future. Somebody once turned that around and said that when you talk about the past, you must talk about before we were born. And when we talk about the future, we must also include the after-life. And so one can speak about the life before birth and the life after death, and in between, this gentleman said, we have the time of our life.

Well of course, that is where the question begins. Because there are many people today, unfortunately – without wanting to mention him by name, but the gentleman who parades his point of view on buses – who would definitely disagree that we are beings sent out of the world of Spirit down to Earth. He, and many others in the modern scientific world that we live in, point to the fact that we have a very limited, mortal mortality on Earth. We live for a while and then we've exhausted all our forces, and then we die. And I suppose that's the end of it; we came into civilisation or into the world through a great big bang, and we will disappear with a great big bang at some indeterminate point in the future. If we really look at the human being and we refrain from including his cosmic spiritual past, then we have lost the image, the model of what is to become, for in our past the seeds of our future were already present. The goal is to

become truly human, and I want to speak about that. You might, by the end of this lecture, say he's given us a kind of a history lesson, and of course the badge of the priestly tribe is that we are slightly preachy – I apologise for that as well – but I want to point to something that is very profound.

Shakespeare has accompanied me throughout the whole of my adult life, and it's been an enormous gift, for Shakespeare is a turning point for us as modern people, especially if we deepen what he has to say. In *Hamlet* we find a soliloquy where he speaks about the human being in very profound terms, and in the next moment dismisses him. He begins this speech by speaking about the earth, the sterile earth. Even the Sun forces are for him nothing more than a foul and pestilent 'congregation of vapours'. And having introduced us to this, he then changes it, and says the following:

"What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason!

how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how

express and admirable! in action how like an angel!

in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the

world! the paragon of animals!"

And then he goes on to say:

"And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights me no more."

How is it possible to be able to give one of the most telling, the most encouraging, the most positive pictures of man that you can read in literature, and within the same breath to dismiss man, to deride him, or to use the modern expression, to trash him? What is it? Are we just dust?

This question is actually not so extraordinary. For it is possible, and it is possible for modern man, to be able to drift out of one lofty realm of consciousness into another, in a split second. I remember many years ago reading a book by an American advertising television director, Jerry Mander, who said, "One day, I was travelling through the Dalmatian Straits, and I looked out and I saw this incredible beauty. And the extraordinary thing was, I felt nothing. I had no emotions, it never touched me. I thought, what has happened to me that I can no longer participate in this beauty that surrounds me." He said, "I'm feeling what my friends back in Los Angeles say, actually, nature's boring." And he changed his life, he left the industry, and he wrote a book, because he realised that what had become of him was actually because of his participation, his involvement, with the television industry. So he wrote a book, "Four Arguments against Television". I think he's had quite a difficult life persuading people, but the fact is that he said something which is a really modern experience. And I hope that in the course of this talk that I will be able at least to place in front of you that whilst the human being, in our time, can move from side to side, that intrinsically, at the core of the human being, there is a future.

I would like to begin hopefully with a theme that will speak to you. If we look into the world today, and at this country especially we can find people who constantly not only wish to do the good, but who actually do the good. There are more charity organisations in this country than anywhere else in the world. This is a country with extraordinary empathy for doing the good. And yet we have to say, in spite of all these extraordinary good deeds we see around us, we live in a world which is still plagued with violence, with criminality, with injustice, with deprivation, with crime, and much more - the list is unending. So any person wanting to become a modern good-doer, I think probably has to ask, with what consciousness has this to be carried out in the future?

And then there is another problem that also meets us in modern times, which is that the challenge that besets us when we ask, and what about truth? What about truth today? We live in a world awash with all different conflicting points of view - so much so that, if you are in a group of people that you don't know particularly well, you might refrain from speaking out your own truth, because, either in a very polite way, or in a rude way, the person will say to you, well that's just your opinion. The opinion which you have nurtured throughout your whole life is just one amongst many opinions. This is like the answer the pupil of Buddha received when he asked, "Well what is truth, master?" Buddha said to him: "It is like twelve men

standing around an elephant, all blind men, all holding a piece of the elephant and saying 'this is the truth.'" Is that the truth? Or is it what society begins to say today "there is no such thing as the pristine eternal truth, it doesn't exist." Truth today is decided upon by the media and by politicians, the court of the world is what the media decides about good or evil and so we can lament within ourselves as we earnestly ask this question: "Well then, how do I know that what I am doing is truly good?" Is, for instance, speaking the truth the same as doing the good? I would like to say that again: "Is, for instance, speaking the truth the same as doing the good?" Then what is the difference between truth and goodness?

Maybe we can say of good that a thing can only be good when it enters the field of action, so to speak, when it is done. Goethe, the German poet and scientist, once said that in the end all things still must be done. So could we just summarise this point and say that truth can be known, but good can only be done; and to do the good in our troubled day and age we cannot bypass one intrinsic reality, one fact and that is that if we do the good we are actually saying that what we observe of the world is not good, there is something in the world that is not good. There is something wrong that is evil in the world; that is something that we want to make better through the good. I would like to trace a little bit further back because I think there is a great transition which can help us. In mediaeval times the highest ideal to aspire to was, without any doubt, truth. The search for truth of course threw up its counter-image, error; and error was to be avoided at all costs. Error was not only wrong, but it was considered an impurity of the soul and so people were banished, exiled, punished, put to death. These were the penalties for erring. It was better to burn for error or even to burn for the truth so as not to betray the cause, and hence if you look back in those times we meet the many martyrs, and of course also those who were then judged as heretics.

If we then continue out of this mediaeval age and work our way towards the Renaissance, we see that a dramatic and far-reaching change takes place in about the fifteenth century: a new faculty, a new faculty which can be pointed to, in many different ways of cognition, of consciousness, of thinking and much more begins to express itself. If we had to talk about it just from the point of view of consciousness, it is a transition, a transition from a consciousness which participated in the world, to a consciousness which, if we give it its most negative expression, is a consciousness of alienation: the human being felt increasingly, evermore cut off. Before, he participated, so to speak, in this outer world which was not yet described by the scientists as an objective outer world. The outer world was the correlation to the inner world. There was an inner and outer, it follows and one experienced the outer world as part of oneself. The world was one experience and one can see that very, very clearly in art, how slowly a distance, a distancing comes in. Just imagine, at that time if you floated your boat to the end of the horizon, you would fall off the earth, and if you didn't believe that you might even be put to death for not believing in a flat world, of a two dimensional world. Suddenly mankind had the experience of distance, of a far-away place, in the age of discoveries. These weren't just jolly ship journeys, they were like initiations of people crossing thresholds that had never been crossed before by humanity, discovering the world at their feet, weighing it, feeling it, smelling it, manipulating it, slowly but surely. So the inside suddenly became an outside and with the birth of natural science which we could maybe give the honour to Bacon for, we see that this distance also creates the beginning of the separation, of being cut off. And I just want to say that I believe it's an illusion that we don't participate in the world, the so-called outer world. I think we do, but we have moved the centre of gravity to another place and so we have created the subject and the object far away. But I just want to give a couple of descriptions of what was happening in that time, which I think is very important for us to discover where we are today.

You probably have heard of a man called Nicolaus Copernicus, probably even more so, a man called Galileo. Copernicus, who was a priest discovered with his astronomical research something which changed the world – we can't underestimate how it changed the world. Copernicus woke up to the idea one day, that the earth did not stand at the centre of the cosmos, with the Sun and all the planets making a wonderful procession around the Earth and the Earth being the apple of God's eye so to speak, his beloved Earth. He was able through his research to point to the fact, - "it's not true"! - the Earth is not the centre of the universe, in fact it's the Sun, and the Earth is some little planet somewhere over here, lost in space. Later

on, Galileo, who supported this theory, was nearly put to death for this, but it is the beginning of a new kind of consciousness where human beings dramatically more and more lost a sense of being at the centre of God's attention, to put it in simplistic terms. So it's as if the Earth is an extra somewhere in the cosmos and what does that mean? What does that mean for consciousness to be just an extra? It caused all different kinds of experiences in that time and into that a person like Niccolo Machiavelli appears, who says "And I want to tell you something more about man. I've just discovered something, man is not to be trusted, don't ever trust your friend, don't trust anybody, in fact everybody is actually (not that they would tell you of course) is manipulating the circumstances for his own good." And if you go to university and study seven years of political science, that's more or less what you learn, that it's based on a power principle, a Machiavellian power principle. When that book of Niccolo Machiavelli came to England, there were four hundred letters to the editors of the press of the day - and there were probably only a hundred thousand people living in London - four hundred letters saying this book must not be published in our country, because people knew somehow that this was the beginning where people no longer have a sense of who my brother is, who is the person who comes to meet me? And this has had - really one could say - dreadful consequences throughout history since then. This was not only Machiavelli's fault; Machiavelli is only a symptom of something that was happening. But it is a remarkable fact, that what developed in this time is something which was completely new: instead of a participatory consciousness, there emerged a spectator consciousness. Suddenly, one looked - and I don't know whether you know the first newspaper in London was called the Spectator - that's what its name was, the Spectator, because that's how one felt about life, you were a spectator, you didn't participate, you could say something about it, but you didn't have to do anything about it.

This touched people in other ways. And it's wonderful if you go to Shakespeare because especially in the king's plays, Shakespeare deals throughout all these works again with this question that the king and the leaders of mankind who felt that they had a spiritual task, that they were, so to speak, informed with the power of the spirit to be able to help man, to rule man, to organise life on earth and suddenly, this becomes a question. And in Richard II, Richard gives a painful speech where he asks a question. It's the question of kingship and whilst this question of kingship belonged to Richard II, it also belongs to every modern person today, the king, so to speak, within us - the individuality within us. How, in a troubled world where we have become spectators rather than doers, does this individuality relate? For I want to say that the experience and consciousness of our self has gone through an extraordinary development in the last five hundred years and I think every person at some point in his biography as he grows from childhood into adolescence, and then into adulthood, has the experience that - "I'm a me!" - that I'm an individuality, who has a destiny, who has something to do here maybe and the question is - "well, what is it?" I've often said to people either evolution is nonsense and that we should just continue creating nonsense or if it has sense - what kind of sense is it? And in a way you could say, that in every one of us this kingly question of Richard's is there. And he asks this question in this way:

What must the king do now? must he submit?

The king shall do it: must he be deposed?

The king shall be contented: must he lose

The name of king? o' God's name, let it go:

I'll give my jewels for a set of beads,

My gorgeous palace for a hermitage,

My gay apparel for an almsman's gown,

My figured goblets for a dish of wood,

My sceptre for a palmer's walking staff,

My subjects for a pair of carved saints

And my large kingdom for a little grave,

A little little grave, an obscure grave;

Or I'll be buried in the king's highway,

I want to deepen this question as we go on; it points to a new state of being. The inner sense which we experience in the twenty-first century has become malady, not only of separation, but it is what I was saying at the beginning – it has become a sense of alienation, that we have great difficulty in finding the bridge from one person to another. What is it that weaves between us?

As I've come from a Christian background you'll understand when I use this as an example the marriage of Cana. You might remember the story, where you could say that the new wine of the future was shown for the first time, where you could say the future of humanity is enkindled and fired with a new sense of meaning. Jesus's mother Mary comes to him and says "They have run out of wine" - (The old wine) - And if you go to the Greek you will see that there's a very sensitive answer that he gives to her, his mother he says to her "What is it woman that weaves between you and me?" What is it? And that question is still being asked by the same being but it is also being asked by one human being to another "What is the destiny we have with one another?" "What weaves between us?" "What wants to happen?" As an answer to the question of knowing that I truly do the good - is not this a forecourt where I ask myself what is it that is being asked? What weaves between us? What goes beyond only my self-interest and to what really needs to be done? This question is remarkable but it is also remarkable for a reason that I want to again confirm, something which I mentioned already. For there is a remarkable fact that in all languages in the world there is one word which differs from all others and yet it is the same; and that is the word or the name, "I" "I am." This word "I" or "I am" designates or refers always to just one person; only I can say I to myself; to every other person, I am "you" and the remarkable word can't sound from outside, you can't say "I" from outside, when I speak out the word "I", I pronounce it from the centre of my being. Nobody can speak it out for me. But what is even more remarkable is that, although I am sure that "I am", it is also true that I notice that every other person, in every other country, in every other nation, also says "I" when they want to designate their most intimate, their most central, aspect of their being. The most precious part of our being, is something that we share in an extraordinary. We are a community, one could say, of "I ams". And if we began more and more to experience what that means, that we are a community of "I ams", that my brother, my sister also carries the same "I am" designation, the same inner aspect, then when I ask the question "What weaves between you and me?" should it be so complicated? Shouldn't it much easier if I already know that the person that I am meeting also carries this very fragile, this very germlike "I"? For as human beings, we have a physical body, which we could say relates us to the earth; and we have a life body which relates us to the life world which stretches far beyond the boundaries of the earth; and we have a soul body filled with emotions, with sympathies, antipathies, with feelings. We even share some of these feelings with the animal kingdom, although we don't go down Dawkins' path.

But the fact is, there is a crown and the crown of the human being is his ego, is his self. But where is the cause of the physical body? We could say, well we could find the cause of the physical body in the earth around us. Where is the cause of the life body that we have? We know very well when something is alive and when it's dead. Well, you could say that we have to stretch our imagination a bit further into the cosmos where life is. And where do all our sympathies, antipathies, our emotions come from? Do they not stretch us right into the cosmos? Into the world of the planets, into the world of the zodiac? What does it mean? The feelings that can be drawn out of the realm of the time we live in, of Libra, for instance. But where is the cause of the human ego? Where is its cause? And then I think that has to stretch very high up. We have to stretch right up into the higher devachan, into the highest heights of heaven, into the realm of the Godhead. For there this gift was created and given, and it would not be wrong to say – changing a little bit the gospel of St John's prologue, which says, "In the beginning was the word", to add: "And in the beginning was the human 'I.'" The "I" was in the beginning and will be in the beginning and this same "I" that speaks of itself through the Logos, our better self, our higher self. Therein lies a mystery, and for me, from the place that I come from, it is the mystery of the Christ Himself, who speaks of Himself when he says "I am the I am." "I am that." "I don't interfere but I am that," is a brother in the struggle that we have.

But there is something more that has to be said about this "I am" and out of this I must say I do want to speak from something that comes out of Anthroposophy, for I would not have been able to say that out of

myself but in Rudolf Steiner's words, (and I paraphrase), the "I am", the true higher being, our better self is not completely incarnated on the earth today. We are but a picture of our higher being. And I don't think that's such a far reaching, complicated thought. I think we constantly feel "Oh if only I'd done better." I look after people who grow old and when they look back on their lives, I can't remember one person ever saying to me "Well I'm jolly satisfied, I did everything that I needed to and I'm a jolly good fellow". They look back and say "If only I..." "I so wanted to..." And we can feel that we're a picture, we're not fully there. It has begun, this process has begun, it began in the fifteenth century, but it is an extraordinary process, it's an enigma actually, because the future of humanity can only come about in freedom. Up to, you could say, the Mediaeval times and in pre-Christian time for certain, to a large extent, man's life was ordered. In Mediaeval times, the woman knew exactly what to do. You went to church, you created children and you put food on the table; that was all; until Joan of Arc appeared and rode off on a horse. There was an ordered world, but as the centuries have gone by, the last five hundred years, we come more and more into the sense of our own freedom. And the extraordinary thing is that we attain this freedom through experience of the world as *maya*, through divorcing ourselves from the spiritual world. By saying there is no spiritual world, we actually create freedom within ourselves.

We have all within us, extraordinary habits, we are born English, we are born German. You know what a bad habit that is? We're born a man! We're born a woman, you know, how hard it is to be anything but a man! We're born into a language, we're born into a creed, a religion. All these things, they're like a uniform that we sit in. For instance there's nothing wrong about being patriotic, but if we are patriotic in the manner that we feel superior to others and that we take advantage and abuse other people and even actually end up creating violence against them, then that's not patriotism anymore, is it, that's something else. So how do we become cosmopolitan? How does the good return? We have to see that on the one hand, becoming earthly gives us a sense of being here, a sense of being cut off, "I'm English and that's it" so to speak. That may be a starting point, but it's not the bridge that we're trying to create. And so this "I" sits within its sheaths and these sheaths bind us, they really make us unfree. It is truly a problem of being born into a country with one language, with one race, and one colour, with one creed. This is the problem for cosmopolitan humanity, but it the basis which we have, because otherwise we would not even be able to begin, because life is about becoming incarnated on earth, at least in the first instance. Now how do we create that bridge? Well, there is a time when we are in fact with our higher being and I believe that we are, every single time that we go to sleep at night, every time when we sleep, our lower ego, our persona, our personality which often covers up who we are, because it's too scary to say who we are, for that could be abused, but at night we re-associate and sense the meaning of why we are here, that it's not nonsense, that there is something that wants to be done and to be created on the earth. And there are other ways, and I gather from what has been said and what I've read that in the Alice Bailey movement, one feels this through meditation and contemplation, through prayer, and through reading about spiritual things; these are all ways of creating a bridge in our daytime consciousness. We actually begin to start hearing something that speaks in us which is a reality; it is our inner voice, our inner conscience. It would take far too long to talk about it fully, but I just want to give an example. We have a sense within us about good and bad, almost an innate sense. We know that. How do we know that? Plato said that already. How is it that a child knows what's straight and crooked? I've actually researched this, and I've discovered that children know without being told what straight and crooked is. How? Where do they come from? We come into life carrying, as Wordsworth says, "Clouds of glory", of the knowledge of the good, it lives within us and we've just lost touch with it but it's there like a sounding board and our conscience awakens us to what good is and how the good needs to endure. And I think that it's possible to experience that when we work out of our conscience in our daily life, we most often have a sense of being most ourselves. I am most myself when I work out of that. You know in my profession one of the words that people dislike intensely is the word sin. Speak about anything, but don't speak about sin. That makes us feel guilty and bad. But if you go to the dictionary and look to see what "sin" really means it's actually quite a relief. It means "to separate." Every time I separate from my true goals, my true aims, my true self I'm sinning. It's not so bad anymore is it? "Conscience is not guilt". Freud said that. Nowhere in the Bible. Conscience is not guilt and it's also not what the neuro-scientists say today, that it's just something that we inherited. Conscience is far, far deeper

and lives right within our innermost being.

I now want to just go one step further before we come to an end. This new experience of consciousness of self is a two edged sword, for on the one hand it gives us a sense of our self but on the other hand we have to say that there are many, many roads that this can go which can express itself in unbelievable hatred, cruelty, crime; terrible events. And I would like to say that I believe that evil is not some kind of imaginary being with horns and a fork waiting to make life bad for you, but that evil is a reality and evil has more than one face. There are evil forces that drag us down, drag us down to the depths, lock us into depression and the feeling that we are caught within the earthly world with no ability to find our way out. And then there is another evil force that draws us out into an illusory world where we more or less float on the earth and no longer take hold of the reality; and we have to find a balance between these forces. And we can be sure that as the ego develops in a person – you can watch that with teenagers – as the ego begins to express itself, all hell breaks loose, for malevolent forces are maliciously interested; for the prize for the adversary forces is the ego, the self of man. If man gives away his ego, gives away his true self, his true identity, there is no future. The future is not guaranteed! There is no hero who will suddenly appear to us, even if he comes in the name of Christ! In respect of man's freedom it will be what we can bring towards this Being, what we do with him as co-workers.

So we can be sure though of one other thing - I remember in South Africa there was a very big charismatic church down the road and sometimes I used to go there because it was such a spectacle to watch the preacher with his American accent, which wasn't his real accent, telling everyone: "I'm telling you brothers and sisters, we are gonna get evil outa here! We're gonna push him outa that door! We're gonna lock it with all the chains of earthly world and he'll be OUT!" And I always wanted to shout "Aargh! He'll come back in through the roof or through the floor or whatever" I am absolutely convinced that evil cannot be banished! Evil can only be transformed! It can only be transformed. You can only become a good man while becoming a true human being - if you understand from what I was saying before. To become a cosmopolitan person means to take those things which weigh us down and to lift them up onto another level. And we can then suddenly see that evil forces are indeed at work in the world, in a way we actually need them! We do need to stand on the ground with our two feet. We do need to be able to lift our heads a little bit into the heavenly worlds to have inspiration, but when it becomes an illusion, when it falls into weight we need to be able to develop something within us and that something within us, I believe, is an inner bearing. I don't know whether you've had that experience but I've had the privilege of that experience of being before somebody who really carries an inner goodness, an inner bearing. It's not a question of what they say, but of how they just carry something within themselves. When one comes into the presence of somebody like that one feels "I have to put my house in order." Not because he tells me that: just because I sense that there is something here which is so noble, something of an inner bearing which has a radiance for the good in the world. So I'd like to say, as we come close to the end, that a lot depends, not only on what we do, not only truly doing the good and even overcoming these aspects of our being and nurturing this, germinating this higher, better self within us, but that it is our inner attitude, who we are, which is going to count in the future, not what we speak about.

I remember that at the school which I was connected with for many years, I often used to ask the teenagers "Who to you is the best teacher?" And it was always the same man. And I said "Why?" And they said "We don't know. But when he comes in the classroom we all feel 'we have to do some work now.'" And that's so impressive that a teacher somehow carries within them a pedagogical impulse which can be felt. And we need to carry an impulse of goodwill, as the statement on your banner proclaims. Goodwill that sits at the centre: and, of course, we are only at the beginning; evolution is a long path, otherwise we should all be depressed and want to jump off the cliff already. We have time, but we are deeply responsible, for this freedom that we have cannot go without responsibility. One cannot be free without responsibility and one cannot be free without morality. Freedom FROM is an adolescent state of being. It's only when I have freedom FOR, when I have the ability to sense what is needed and do the good – not out of coercion, but out of my own soul, out of my higher being, out of my inner voice – then I actually do something in the

world that comes out of another place and I turn away and move on.

I've often used a simple picture: one day when you get to heaven, you get to the pearly gates and you meet St Peter and he says "Good day" and "What is it?" And you say "Well, I'd like to come in please, may I?" And he says "Well why should you think you should come in?" He said "Because I've got this whole knapsack of good deeds on my back." And he says "Ah well, if they're on your back, they're surely going to weigh you down too much for you to get through the door into heaven." For *real* good deeds are left behind, they become the manna, they become the source of new life, they're not part of our own personal, celebrity culture any more, they've gone into the stream of goodwill. Goodwill is something that we do and move on and we do it again and again and again.

There is one more serious issue that I should like to consider. If we look back on the twentieth century we might ask: "What have a hundred years of modern civilisation brought us?" The nineteenth century brought us the darkness of the industrial revolution; and by the end of the nineteenth century, at least in Christian Europe, one said for certain "God is dead." The twentieth century came, and from the first day everything came, Darwinism, depth psychology, all the various things that have just come, for instance mobile telephones. All these various things have come this century. But what did we do to each other? Do we realise that a hundred and eighty seven million people died in the twentieth century in warfare! A hundred and eighty seven million! That's nearly three times the population of Great Britain and Ireland wiped out in war! And we certainly haven't got better since the new century has broken, definitely not, in fact we seem to be going down a very, very precarious route.

What kind of ego is coming to birth amidst all this chaos? What kind of self lives in humanity that we can also create, after the second world war, forty million homeless people; and that homelessness has grown, and has grown not only outwardly, but also inwardly. I would say the biggest malady of the twenty-first century is inner homelessness, the question: "Where is my Home?" And I think this question that I place before you is a real one. This question of "what is it that weaves between us?" We are, out of our freedom, responsible for one another. We need to have a conscience about one another. Every so often somebody arrives who is able to say something which is just remarkable. There was a great, great poet, playwright, Christopher Fry. I personally think he was a modern day Shakespeare, an extraordinary man, and he wrote a play amongst others called "The Sleep of Prisoners" and he had real moral intuitions. His intuitions weren't based on a morality out of the past, which is the big problem of morality, if it's based on what somebody said before or tenets of the past. We need to develop an intuitive morality, a morality which is able consciously to deal with each situation as it comes towards us. And he writes in this play this speech, which, as Shakespeare sometimes does, comes from the mouth of an almost subsidiary, second-rate character called Meadows. And this is what he, Christopher Fry speaks,

Dark and cold we may be, but this
Is no winter now. The frozen misery
Of centuries breaks, cracks, begins to move;
The thunder is the thunder of the floes,
The thaw, the flood, the upstart Spring.
Thank God our time is now when wrong
Comes up to face us everywhere,
Never to leave us till we take
The longest stride of soul we ever took.
Affairs are now soul size.
The enterprise
Is exploration into God.
Where are you making for? It takes
So many thousand years to wake,
But will you wake for pity's sake!

This force of which Christopher Fry speaks is a fundamental force that lives for years and will overcome everything that comes towards us. It is the basis really of finding the good and seeing that the good endures in the world. It is a force that lives in every human being – it is the force of hope and the light of hope. The future depends on us awakening this hope within us. For this hope is not just a wish. There is a battle that is going on in the human soul: affairs have taken on, as Fry says, a human quality, but within us there is a power of hope and this power of hope is actually the power of resurrection. The reality of Christ's second coming is to be sought, I believe, in awakening ourselves, awakening within our human soul to this future of hope. If we continually strive as human beings and are careful, we will be able to bring about that which is needed through our own efforts, through our efforts which are supported by the world of spirit. All this gives solid ground to hope that in time we shall create a new world.



SECOND SESSION

THE SPRING TOWARDS FREEDOM: LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF THE SILENCED – Dr Corinne Kumar

Corinne Kumar is Secretary General of El Taller International, a Tunisian based International NGO with over 500 partner organisations particularly in the global south. El Taller seeks to be a space for reflection, exchange and networking for a wide spectrum of civil society organisations and social movements. She is also a founding member of the Asian Women's Human Rights Council – a network of human rights groups in the Asia Pacific region – and founder of the International Courts of Women. She describes herself as a pilgrim of life – sometimes a philosopher, poet, human rights theoretician and activist.

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It is a privilege indeed to be among you this afternoon:

my very special thanks to Dominic, Christine and all at Goodwill International for all the good will and care that you have showered on me; thank you Christine for the wonderful humour and calm, even when, two days ago, you were not sure I would be here with you; but we laughed through it all, sent each other much hope on the wind and yes, the whole universe conspired with us!

You have chosen the title of my presentation and I will try to weave the context of the recent happenings in Tunisia and the region, and offer through this some of our work in listening to, and learning from, the subjugated and silenced voices of our times.

Tunisia, as we know today, did usher in what is being called the *arab spring*, crossing the lines of fear, refusing the oppression of the last twenty three years, bringing a new political phenomena to the arab world, offering the *karama* revolution of dignity and freedom for all.

It was indeed an insurrection of hope;
it returned hope to the world.

We live, as a poet said, in the best of times and the worst of times:

1. We live in violent times:
times in which our community and collective memories are dying;
times in which the many dreams are turning into never-ending illusions,
illusions of power, of wealth, of freedom,
while the future is increasingly fragmenting;
times that are collapsing the many life visions into a *single cosmology* that has
created its own *universal truths*- equality, development, *freedom*;

truths that are inherently discriminatory, even violent.
 times that have created the globalized world order that dispossesses the majority, desecralizes nature, destroys cultures and civilizations, denigrates the women;
 times in which the war on terrorism brings
 a time of violent uncertainty, brutal wars:
 wars for resources- oil, diamonds, minerals: wars of occupation,
 times that are giving us new words;
preemptive strike, collateral damage, embedded journalism, enemy combatants
unmanned drones, military tribunals, rendition:
 new words:
words soaked in blood.
 times in which the dominant political thinking, institutions and instruments of justice are hardly able to redress the *violence* that is escalating, and *intensifying*,
 times in which *progress* presupposes the *genocide* of the many, the *gendercide* of the women;
 the violence taking newer and more contemporary forms,
 times in which human rights have come to mean the rights of the privileged, the rights of the powerful and for the masses to have their freedoms, their human rights, they must surrender their most fundamental human right of all, the *right to be human*
 times in which the *political spaces* for the other is diminishing, even *closing*.

The world, it would seem, is at the end of its imagination.

Perhaps it is in this moment when systems of meanings breakdown and are destroyed that new meanings can be explored, revealed.

Only the imagination stands between us and fear: fear makes us behave like sheep when we should be dreaming like poets.

2. So let me gather some stars and make a fire for you, and tell you a story:

It is a story of horror and hope, a story of the missing, the disappeared; a story so real, yet magical: a story from Lawrence Thornton in *Imagining Argentina*.

It is a story about Argentina under the dictators. The hero is a gentle person Carlos Rueda, an intense man who directs a children's theatre and is at home in the world of children. During the time of the dictators, Carlos discovers that he has an extraordinary gift. He realizes that he is the site, the locus, *the vessel for a dream*. He can narrate the fate of the missing. From all over Argentina, men and women come to his home and sitting in his garden, Carlos tells them stories: tales of torture, courage, death, stories about the missing, about the *disappeared*.

One day the regime arrests his wife Celia, for a courageous act of reporting. The world of Carlos collapses till he realizes that he must keep her alive in his imagination.

Only the imagination, says Carlos, stands between us and fear; fear makes us behave like sheep when we must dream like poets.

As the regime becomes more violent, it is the women who object. It is the women as wives, as mothers, as daughters who congregate in silence at the *Plaza de Mayo*. Silently, each carries a placard announcing or asking about the *missing*. The women walk quietly, sometimes holding hands.

It is not just an act for protest; it is a *drama of caring*; each listening to the other's story, each assuring the other through touch, weaving a sense of community;
 the community grows as the men join them.

all the while, through the window, the Generals watch them.

People realize that they cannot be indifferent observers, spectators, bystanders, *even experts*. the indifference of the watchers to the regime is not enough.

one must be a witness.

a witness is not a mere spectator

s/he *looks* but s/he also *listens*.

s/he *remembers*.

Everything must be remembered: nothing must be forgotten.

we must retrieve history from memory.

We must explore the new imaginary not as experts but as witnesses

3. And in drawing the contours of a new imaginary, I ask you to listen to the wind, to ancient wisdoms, to new visions, to the arab street, to the indigenous, to people marching to La Paz, to the Occupy public spaces movements in eighty three countries (nine hundred thirty cities), to the voices at St Pauls':

specially more to the wind from the south;

the south as third world, as the civilizations of Asia, the Pacific,

the Arab world, Africa, Central and Latin America;

the south as the voices of movements of peoples, wherever these movements exist;

the south as the voices and wisdoms of women.

the south as the discovering of new paradigms,

which challenge the existing theoretical concepts and categories

breaking the mind constructs, seeking a new language to

describe what it perceives; refusing the one, objective,

rational, scientific world view as the only world view;

the south as the discovery of other cosmologies, as the

discovery of other knowledges that have been hidden,

submerged, silenced:

the dominant cosmology disqualified forms of knowledge that did not fit into its frames,

the south then as a disobedience, as a rebellion,

*as an insurrection of these subjugated knowledges **

the south as history; the south as memory

the south as the finding of new political paradigms,

inventing new political patterns, creating alternative

political imaginations; the south as the revelation of each

civilization in its own idiom; the south as conversations

between civilizations and cosmologies.

The south then as new universalisms

And in our search for new understandings of the South

it promises to bring to the world new meanings,

new moorings;

It invites us to create new political imaginaries;

the South then as new political imaginary.

Our imaginaries must be different;

the new imaginary cannot have its moorings in the dominant discourses but must seek to locate itself in a *discourse of dissent* that comes from a deep critique of the different forms of domination and violence in our times: any new imaginary cannot be tied to the dominant discourses and systems of violence and exclusion. For to imagine is not simply to see what does not exist or what we want to exist; it is a profound act of creativity to see what is and this requires imaginative leaps.

We need to imagine alternative perspectives for change; to shift our consciousness, to craft visions that will evolve out of conversations across cultures and other traditions; conversations between cultures that challenge and transcend the totalitarianism of the dominant logos; conversations that are not mediated by the hegemony of the *universal discourse*.

The new imaginary invites us to another human rights discourse; one that will not be trapped either in the *universalisms* of the dominant thinking tied as it is to a market economy, a monoculturalism, a materialistic ethic and the politics and polity of the nation state; neither must it be caught in the discourse of the *culture specific* but one that will proffer universalisms that have been born out of a *dialogue of civilizations*. And this will mean another *ethic of dialogue*. We need to find new perspectives on the universality of human rights *in dialogue with other cultural perspectives of reality*, other notions of development, democracy, even dissent, other concepts of power (not power to control, or power to hegemonize, to manipulate but power to facilitate, to enhance) other notions of justice / of equality; equality makes us flat and faceless citizens of the nation state. Through its very diverse voices, the *Courts of Women* attempt to speak of *equality*, not in terms of sameness, but in terms of *difference*; a difference that is rooted in dignity that comes from depth, from the *roots* of people, of women who have been dispossessed and denigrated.

4. The *Courts of Women* are an articulation of this new imaginary:

a horizon that invites us to think, to feel, to challenge, to connect, to dare;

it is an attempt to define a new space for women, and infuse this space with a new vision, a new politics; it is a gathering of voices and visions of the *global south*, locating itself in a *discourse of dissent*, in itself it is a dislocating practice, challenging the new world order of globalization, crossing lines, breaking new ground; listening to the voices and movements from the margins; conversing with the diverse visions and cosmologies of cultures and civilizations in the *global south*.

In its vision and methodology the *Courts of Women* challenging the dominant ways to knowledge, seek to weave together the *objective* reality with the *subjective* testimonies of the women; the personal *text* with the political *context*; the *logical* with the *lyrical*; the rational with the intuitive; *reason with compassion*; knowing that we cannot separate the *dancer* from the *dance*, offering the pain, the politics, the poetry; urging us to discern fresh insights, offering us other ways to know, inviting us to seek deeper layers of knowledge, towards creating a new imaginary.

The *Courts of Women* are public hearings: the Court is used in a symbolic way. In the Courts, the voices of the survivors are listened to; women bring their personal testimonies of violence, transforming private individual memory into shared public knowledge, giving what is seen as personal violence a *public face*, a political significance: the Courts are *sacred spaces* where women speaking in a language of suffering, name the crimes, seeking redress, even reparations and a healing.

While the *Courts of Women* listen to the voices of the survivors, they also listen to the voices of women who resist, who rebel, who refuse to turn against their dreams. They hear of survival in the *dailiness of life*; they hear of women and movements resisting violence in its myriad forms - war, ethnicity, fundamentalism; they hear of women struggling for work, wages, their rights to the land; of how they survive - of their knowledges, their wisdoms that have been inaudible, *invisible*. They hear challenges to the

dominant human rights discourse, whose frames have excluded the knowledges of women. The Courts of Women hear of the need to extend the discourse to include the meanings, symbols and perspectives of women: it speaks of a new generation of human rights and responsibilities.

In its expression of a new imaginary the Courts are finding different ways of speaking *truth to power*; challenging power, recognizing that the concepts and categories enshrined in the ideas and institutions of our times are unable to grasp the violence; violence that is not only escalating, but it also intensifying; the forms are becoming more brutal: yet, the Courts of Women are more than speaking truth to power, more than being a critic of power; it is about *creating another authority*.

The Courts of Women also speak *truth to the powerless*, seeking the conscience of the world, creating other reference points than that of the rule of law, returning *ethics to politics*. It invites us to the *decolonization* of our structures, our minds and our *imaginings*; the Courts of Women are about subsumed cultures, subjugated peoples, silenced women *reclaiming their political* voice and in breaking the silence refusing the conditions by which power maintains its patriarchal control.

It speaks too of another notion of justice; of a jurisprudence, which bringing individual justice and reparation will also be transformatory for all. A jurisprudence that is able to *contextualize* and *historicize* the crimes moving away from a justice with punishment, a justice of revenge, a retributive justice, to a justice seeking redress, even reparation; a justice with truth and reconciliation, a *restorative justice*, a *justice with healing*, healing individuals and communities. Can the *Courts of Women*, can the tears of the women, these sites of pain and devastation lead us to re-thinking and *re-imagining another jurisprudence*? the *Courts of Women* are a step towards re-imagining this jurisprudence from within civil society in which we are able to creatively connect and deepen our collective insights and understanding of the *context* in which the *text* of our everyday realities are being written.

The *Courts of Women* invite us to write another history, to *re-tell* history, to re-claim the power of memory: a counter hegemonic history from the margins.

Women are writing another history giving private, individual memory its public face, its political significance; transforming memory into political discourse. The Courts of Women are communities of the suffering, communities of the violated but they are also communities of survivors, of knowers, of healers, of seed keepers, of story tellers, of women telling history as a way of reclaiming memory.

A *counter hegemonic history*, a history of the margins: the *Courts of Women* are a journey of the margins, a journey rather than an imagined destination; a journey in which the dailiness of our lives proffer possibilities for our imaginary, survival and sustenance, for connectedness and community. For the idea of imaginary is inextricably linked to the personal, political and historical dimensions of community and identity. It is the dislocation expressed by particular social groups that makes possible the articulation of new imaginaries. These social groups, the margins, the social movements, the indigenous, the women, are beginning to articulate these new imaginaries.

There is an urgent need to challenge the centralizing logic of the master narrative implicit in the dominant discourse - of class, of gender, of race. This dominant logic is a logic of violence and exclusion, a logic of superior and inferior, a logic of civilized and uncivilized.

This centralizing logic must be decentred, must be interrupted, even disrupted.

The *Courts of Women* interrupt; they speak to this disruption; to this trespass. The *Courts of Women* are finding new paradigms of knowledge and new paradigms of politics; a politics of care, concern, community, connectedness: a *politics with ethics*;

a political vision that will transform us all.

The *Courts of Women is a tribute to the human spirit*: in which testimonies can not only be heard but also legitimized. It invites the subjugated and the silenced, to articulate the crimes against them; it is a taking away of the legitimizing dominant ideologies and returning their *life-worlds* into their own hands.

The Courts of Women celebrate the subversive voices, voices that disrupt the master narrative of war and occupation, of violence, of patriarchy

We need to find new spaces for our imaginations: gathering the subjugated knowledges, seeking ancient wisdoms with new visions, listening to the many voices speaking but listening too to the many voices, unspoken.

The Courts of Women offer another logic, another lyric,
lifting the human spirit, creating a new imaginary,
offering another dream

What is essential is not to develop new doctrines or dogmas, or to define a new, coherent political schema, but to suggest a *new imaginative attitude*, one that can be *radical and subversive* which will be able to change the logic of our development.

Perhaps, as the poet says we *should now break the routine, do an extravagant action that would change the course of history*. What is essential is to go beyond the politics of violence and exclusion of our times and to find *new political imaginations*.

An imaginary where people of the margins, of the *global south* are subjects of our own history, writing our own cultural narratives, offering new universals, imagining a world in more life enhancing terms, *constructing a new radical imaginary*.

the south as new political imaginary:

embracing, as the Zapatistas say, *many worlds!*

In its search towards a new political imaginary, the Courts of Women work towards a politics with an *ethic of care*; for any theory of poverty (poverty lines, the World Bank one-dollar-a day, millennium development goals, poverty reduction strategies etc) that is disconnected from a theory of care and suffering will not listen to the voice of the other and simply leave the poor out! The new political imaginary speaks to an ethic of care, affirming one's responsibility to the other, an ethic that will include compassion, connectedness, community, *conviviality* (that wonderful phrase of Ivan Illich). The discourse and praxis of rights cannot mean only economic and political emancipation, but must challenge the current paradigms of knowledge, thought and politics.

What we need in the world today are new universalisms; not universalisms that deny the many and affirm the one; not universalisms born out of euro-centricities or patriarchalties; universals that recognize the universals in the specific civilizational idioms in the world; but universalisms that will respect the plurality of the different societies, of their philosophy, their history, their traditions and cultures; one which will find a resonance in the different civilizations, different cosmologies. It is here in the cosmologies and rootedness of cultures, here with people on the peripheries that we seek the deepening of an *alternate discourse*. It is here perhaps, that the notion of the *sacred survives*.

can we return the spiritual to the material?

the ethical to the political?

can we find the feminine in the increasingly violent, male civilizational ethos?

can we bring back the sacred to the earth?

We need a different dream:

We need to invite each other to a different dream;

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CLOSING ADDRESS – *Christine Morgan*

I want to close the Seminar by saying that what characterises World Goodwill's approach to human welfare is that it views all world events as expressions of underlying energies and forces that are working their way into physical expression. This expression is literally a science of social progress and evolution to which every interested person can usefully contribute. It involves observation and mental action - perceiving the helpful, constructive impetus that is emerging in the collective consciousness of humanity and then working in meditation to strengthen and direct it in alignment with a higher purpose. These influences that are emerging are divine in origin but they depend upon us, as individuals, for their right expression.

So it's evident from the turbulent state of the world that these tremendous new energies emerging from the inner world of meaning are evoking a mixed response, drawing to the surface both the good and the bad for examination and redemption. This is a profound evolutionary impulse and humanity is being tested to the core. The subjective work of World Goodwill during this critical period is to help form a bridge between the spiritual and mundane worlds – to engage with this impulse and help express it in cooperation with the thinking of those who are active in constructive human development.

From this perspective, the current surge towards freedom in the Arab world and North Africa has to be viewed as the result of spiritual pressure bearing down on human consciousness from the inner, subjective worlds. Rather than thinking of freedom only as a state of release from captivity of some kind – be it physical or psychological – it can be regarded as the expression of a greater purpose. In connection with this, Alice Bailey described 'liberty' as "the easiest aspect of the divine will for humanity to grasp. It is in reality the first revelation given to man of the nature of the Will of God", she said. Liberty or Freedom therefore equates to the expression of divinity in human consciousness. Rather than being just a release from an imposed situation of some kind, freedom is actually an evolutionary impulse that lifts consciousness out of old patterns of thinking and behaviour through the recognition of a more inclusive and expansive state of being.

The closest we can come to understanding and demonstrating the force of liberation at present is through the energy of "goodwill" – a term in common use but whose meaning and significance is little understood. Superficially considered, many regard it as sentimental, characterised by kindly, well-intentioned deeds. And yet the Will is one of the strongest of all human attributes – the outstanding achievements of humanity have all necessarily been supported by tremendous demonstrations of the will aspect. The will is a dynamic power that, when fused with love and wisdom, dramatically furthers the spiritualisation of the human condition; but equally, when not in a symbiotic relationship with these qualities, becomes the tool of the despot.

The way that human beings respond to the conscious powers that lie behind the evolutionary process

determines our fate - this is the doctrine of human free will that gives freedom to evolve or devolve, and without which there could be no evolution of consciousness. As the philosopher Victor Frankl recognised, "between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." This is the test that is set before every human being, and now that communication networks span the globe it is a test for humanity as one collective planetary organism too. Humanity is living in the space between stimulus and response. Can the stimulus of energy from the spiritual realms be responded to in a way that sees the rich diversity of the human species come together in the freedom of spiritual fellowship? Can we all rise to the challenge of understanding the true meaning of freedom as far as in us lies?

While some parts of the world are still concerned with fundamental freedoms such as the struggle for basic human rights, others have achieved this to some degree, and a greater emphasis needs placing on the fact that freedom brings with it certain sacrifices and responsibilities to others. For there is often a glamour associated with the idea of freedom that has a selfish element in it – where individuals demand that society meet their every need. But true freedom means more responsibility to society, to humanity and to the other kingdoms of nature for which we are collectively responsible. True freedom demands of us greater service and giving, the relinquishing of the non-essentials in life in order to earnestly strive after greater truth.

The world is being brought to an understanding that the birth of freedom naturally entails this relinquishment and the death or destruction of that which needs to be left behind. We are living in an era of protest and rebellion where the championing of certain rights and freedoms is actively reinforcing the relinquishment process. Behind it all lies a subjective vision of unity and synthesis that is being sustained by the spiritually minded. The more we expand our minds, the harder it is not become over-sensitised to this turbulent world situation. But we have to strive to maintain a stable and balanced perspective if we are to be of use in helping to implement the Divine Plan of love and light through meditation.

So, bearing this in mind, let us now close what has been an inspiring and productive afternoon by gathering the thoughts we have been pondering. Together we have formed a reservoir of light and hope that we can radiate deep into human consciousness and so play our part in the One Work during this time of unprecedented crisis and opportunity.

As we work with the meditation "strengthening the hands of the new group of world servers" – we can be aware that this is an ever expanding group of servers from all fields, nations and races who are held together subjectively by a common intention to free "the prisoners of the planet". Whether these prisoners are those who are imprisoned by authorities, dictatorships, corruption and poverty, or by psychological aspects of fear, anxiety or prejudice – facets of our own lesser nature, we can imagine the dissolving of these constraints and the manifestation of freedom in a more compassionate world.



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