
The Plato soul in history

Lecture by Eugen Kolisko on November 8, 1925*

Part 1

Throughout many of the lectures we have heard here, in particular also through the remarks of Dr. Wachsmuth¹, it resounded how in the life work of Dr. Rudolf Steiner everything depends on the fact that whenever a step is taken towards spiritual deepening, an attempt is also made to work on the other side for the whole of humanity, and that the things that have been explored spiritually are carried down into the material, into the earthly. One could characterize the anthroposophical movement, as founded by Dr. Steiner, in such a way that it always seeks to maintain a balance between the spiritual and the material. This was also the feeling we had when Dr. Steiner, in the course of the last few years, gave us an extraordinary deepening through the Christmas Conference², how he spoke in an unmeasured abundance from the spiritual worlds, how on the other hand he gave us the opportunity to penetrate even more into the understanding of the earthly, and how he finally founded the Anthroposophical Society in such a form that it can to a certain extent have a far-reaching effect on the social. And again and again he spoke of these two steps that are necessary: the step towards deepening and the step towards broadening; so that one could already sense how Dr. Steiner's whole life's work is based on achieving this wonderful equality.

important to keep.

Now, in the last period of his life, Dr. Steiner gave us those wonderful lectures on *karma*³, he illuminated the whole of world history from this point of view. This makes it possible today to immerse ourselves in the images of the individual personalities that he described to us in these lectures and to understand the whole of world history from the way in which they reincarnated. It is the case that everything that we external representation of world history have, as it were crumbles to dust and behind it shines forth that which has been created by the deeds of individual human personalities.

This makes it possible for us today to depict world history in such a way that we can place each individual event in the great spiritual tableau that Rudolf Steiner has brought down through his karma research, and world history then shows us what the individual personalities carry down from the life of the spiritual world and from earlier earthly lives into earthly history. And we understand what takes place in history only out of the spiritual impulses and intentions of the human beings; but we also understand how in what is laid down in the karma lectures there is something which is not to be regarded merely as a representation of the course of history, but something which sets everyone the task of occupying himself with it, so that he is led to a correct understanding of the laws of reincarnation and karma and can place himself with his own being in this great context of the events of humanity. For the study of each of these personalities, which Dr. Steiner has described, brings us together with people, with human beings who have lived together with one or other of us, who have actually lived. In these pictures, Dr. Steiner gives us something like landmarks that we can *remember* by feeling something of what wants to mature within us: yes, I was there myself together with these personalities. Just as we are reminded of a similar event through another event, so it is with these karma reflections; they reach so deeply into the soul because we feel that the history of our own soul being is connected with them. And since Dr. Steiner gave us these karma observations, it is now possible for us to make the course of world history completely our own, to make it our own.

* Kolisko gave this lecture to members of the Anthroposophical Society in The Hague.

that it can become our own lifeblood.

Dr. Steiner gave these lectures on karma so that the concrete study of reincarnation and karma would come alive in a number of people. Research into reincarnation and karma runs through the entire anthroposophical movement. It was Rudolf Steiner's intention from the very beginning, and after the Christmas Conference it was possible to bring down very concrete individual topics relating to karma from the spiritual world. This now presents us with the task of dealing with it in an intensive way.

Now Dr. Steiner began by presenting a series of personalities in their repeated lives on earth, and these reflections on the karma of those individuals then passed over into the reflection on the karma of the Anthroposophical Society, into which he concluded the whole reflection. And then one had to say to oneself: Only now does one realize how our whole movement stands in the context of world history! We became more and more oriented towards the concrete tasks of the Anthroposophical Society in the future.

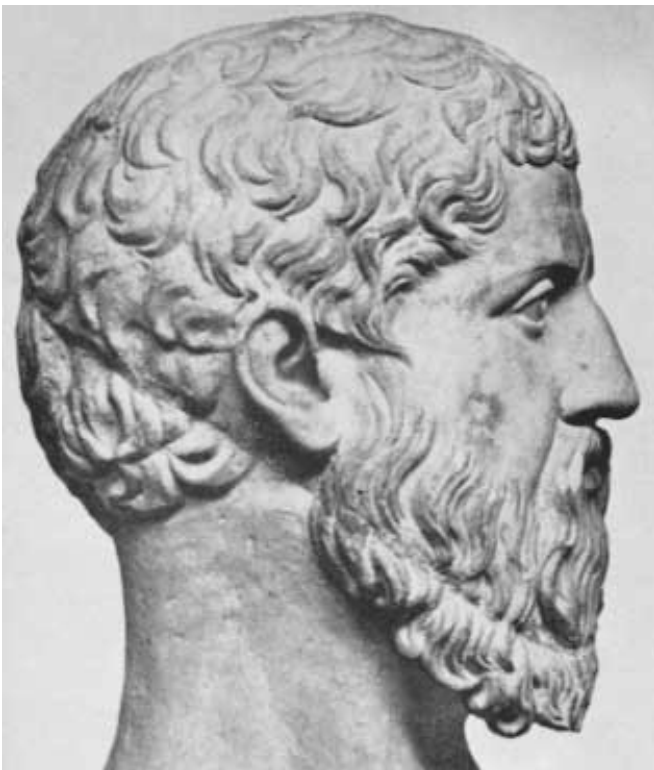
The other thing that could be felt so strongly in those days when Dr. Steiner gave these last karma lectures⁴ was how he spoke of these personalities with tremendous seriousness, how he repeatedly referred to individual personalities who have the greatest difficulties at the present time in that they have to descend to earth and incarnate.⁵ Dr. Steiner said again and again - in those last days of September - how he wanted to speak comprehensively about the karma of the anthroposo-

phical movement. Again and again, he then inserted the observation of individual personalities, namely those of whom he emphasized how they, who in a previous life on earth had lived completely inside the spiritual world, how they had absorbed impulses that led them to an initiation, but how they had to struggle with the greatest difficulties when they had to incarnate in the last centuries. The tragic seriousness of what reincarnation and karma mean today could be seen in this. And in the *penultimate lecture* that Dr. Steiner gave,⁶ he pointed to a personality that can only be viewed with understanding if it is seen from this point of view.

He spoke about the personality of *Plato*. And like wildfire - I would like to say - it went through the circles of friends at that time, even those who were not in Dornach, that Dr. Steiner had now also spoken about the personality of Plato. And from *the way* he spoke about it, it became clear that the repeated earthly lives of *this* personality, when understood, shed a tremendous amount of light and enlightenment on the entire history of the world. Our task, however, is - as I believe - to make us understand the allusions made by Dr. Steiner in these karma pictures and to try to bring in more and more of everything that can be found as confirmation, so that we look at these individual personalities with the help of what we can find in the study of the works and the history of such personalities. This is actually how you first learn about the laws of reincarnation and karma. And so, based on this, I would like to speak today about the *Plato entity*, in that I will try to present from the most diverse sides what can shed a very bright light on what Dr. Steiner said about this entity at the time.

Dr. Steiner described Plato as in a sense still summarizing old mystery views, so that by setting up his "ideas" doctrine, an imaginative experience of the spiritual world (the Platonic

"Ideas" are not to be understood at all if one looks at them from the point of view of today's thinking), how he could only speak of the spiritual world in this way because he still had an imaginative view within him; how he lived in a time when he could still summarize, as in a wonderful painting, what could still be obtained in connection with the old mystery knowledge at that time; and how he speaks in such a way that a very peculiar love for spiritual knowledge appears in him; how one has to do, for example, when Plato speaks of "Eros", with something that is a loving going into spiritual connections - the "Platonic love"; how one has to do in it a deep connecting of that which one could still obtain in connection with the old mystery knowledge. How, for example, when Plato speaks of "Eros", we have to do with something that is a loving entering into spiritual connections - "Platonic love"; how in it we have a deep connection between that which can be an element of love in the human soul and knowledge of the spirit. Plato, who in a certain sense summarized everything that



Plato, 428(27) - 347 B.C.



Karl Julius Schröer, 11.1.1825 (Bratislava) - 16.12.1900 (Vienna)

was present in Greece at that time - precisely out of the ancient mysteries - wrote at a time when human thinking was not yet fully developed, when thinking had not yet developed into "logic", when the present form of consciousness had not yet emerged, when "science", "philosophy" in this sense did not yet exist. So Plato was writing at that last moment of ancient spiritual knowledge. And this makes it possible to understand how Plato's soul had to continue to live through the following times. Dr. Steiner describes how the Plato soul passed through the gate of death into spiritual worlds, but how this soul, as more and more of what was still there as spirit knowledge on earth disappeared and that which then led to the materialism of the more recent times arose, experienced a tremendous difficulty in finding its way back to earth. When Christianity was already spreading, it was extraordinarily difficult for the Plato soul to find its way into the Christian world, into this world that was not only permeated with the impulses of Greekism, but also with those of Romanism. And it was precisely this Roman world in the Middle Ages that made it extraordinarily difficult for the Plato soul to re-embodiment itself, so that it could only do so a long time later, in a female personality, in Hroswitha von Gandersheim⁷, the nun who wrote works and dramas in the tenth century, first within Germany, and in Latin, but which can be said to represent something like a very important phenomenon in the Germanic-German nature of that time.

Dr. Steiner described this personality of Hroswitha in such a way that one could feel very strongly how the Plato soul had to embody itself in a body that still gave it the opportunity to live out its own nature. One can perhaps characterize this personality by saying that it emerged from that area of Germany where, precisely through the imperial personalities of the time,⁸ much that was Greek, many Greek impulses had an effect; it was born into an atmosphere where it was possible to connect with this Greek element. And if you look at her dramas, they are actually all representations of the contrast between Christianity and the Roman Empire. For example, in one drama⁹ a character appears, a very wise character, a woman with three daughters who, during the rise of Christianity, is persecuted by the Roman emperor, who wants to persuade her to sacrifice to his gods and to whom this woman now opposes all her wisdom. For example, there is a conversation in which this Sapientia confronts the emperor with a kind of representation of Platonism, the Platonic-mystical theory of numbers. He is almost shaken by the woman's wisdom. On the other hand, we see how, in their steadfastness, these women, who are being persecuted and from whom all the Greek-pagan wisdom - but Christianized - still speaks, are actually spiritually victorious over their adversaries under the tribulations to which they are exposed. The "triumph of the Greek-Christianized virgin over the Roman Caesar" recurs again and again.

And the other drama, the legend of *Theophilus*, is interesting.¹⁰ It shows how Theophilus, a kind of Faust, devotes himself to the devil and falls into sin; but how, after the whole drama has played itself out, he is redeemed by having the intercession of the Virgin Mary on his behalf. The personality of Hroswitha describes herself as being completely filled with the impulse that emanates from the cult of Mary; again and again she presents herself as a personality that claims to owe everything to this immersion in the virginity of Mary. One feels towards this Hroswitha like a protest against the after-effects of Romanism, of Caesarism, which permeated the whole world at that time; one sees, so to speak, Greek spiritual virginity combining with Christianity and feels this in a wonderful way running through every trait of this female personality of Hroswitha. In this *Theophilus*, for example, we have before us something like the first Faust drama in German literature, and we see how Hroswitha also masters the Latin language in a magnificent way. She was regarded as a miracle at the time. People could not understand how this female personality could appear and master the language in the style of the greatest Latin poets in - Germania, where there was no literature at all. And especially in the age of humanism, when her works, which had long been unknown, were once again

This personality was celebrated in an extraordinary way. This is how we can understand this personality, who emerged from the Greek world like Plato and had to embody himself in the Roman-Christian era.

Dr. Steiner then went on to describe how this personality was then unable to incarnate for a long time, but then embodied itself in Karl Julius *Schröder*, Rudolf Steiner's teacher. Dr. Steiner drew particular attention to the way in which Schröder approached the Goethe personality. And one can actually only understand Schröder's reverence for the Goethe personality if one is able to look at the repeated earth lives in the way that Dr. Steiner described in the karma lectures. In his lecture, Dr. Steiner described to us how in a previous life the Plato soul was connected with one of its pupils, with a young sculptor, how this pupil (Dr. Steiner has already described this in earlier lectures)¹¹, on whom Plato's eye rested, as it were, with pleasure, with a certain love, developed under the eyes of Plato, and how all this love that existed at that time for this personality comes up again in a later life on earth, when this young sculptor from the Platonic period reappears in Goethe, so that this explains how Plato now, by reappearing as Karl Julius Schröder, feels the need to speak with such love about the personality of Goethe, as he does, for example, when he speaks about the latter. For example, when he speaks about *Goethe's Faust*¹² and writes a commentary on Faust, so that he can become the only one who still fully understood Goethe at that time of the already emerging materialism. It is only on such grounds that one can understand the effectiveness that Schröder developed.

Now Dr. Steiner showed how something peculiar was present in Schröder, how on the one hand he developed a deep intimacy of spirit, but on the other hand, as if with woman-like squeamishness, he shrank back from entering fully into the full external civilization, how he was born as a stranger, so to speak, into the modern civilization of the 19th century. He was able to recognize Goethe's importance in the field of natural science, but he himself could not fully enter this field. Dr. Steiner expressed this by saying that it was felt that Schröder did not have the ability to carry the spiritual impulses to the utmost of the civilization of the time, but that he had to retreat from it. And Dr. Steiner said: "What else was there to do, if that was the case, but to bring *anthroposophy* to the people themselves? (See box on page 15.) One senses how there is actually something extraordinarily tragic in this Plato soul: one can see how everything that goes back to old spiritual knowledge, that is still completely connected with the world forces, with the spiritual worlds, comes into tremendous difficulty when it is to be carried down into earthly life again. And I would like to try,

I would like to use the personality of Schröder in particular to show from various points of view how her whole life can only be understood if we look at the account that Rudolf Steiner gave of it.

Schröder was still born into the Goethe era, but in such a way that he then lived into the age of materialism. He studied Goethe, wrote his commentary on Faust and followed Goethe's portrayal of this representative of humanity's aspirations with extraordinary affection. It is interesting to compare the Theophilus *drama* of Hroswitha with some of what Schröder then teaches about Goethe's *Faust*.¹³ One then senses how Schröder's understanding of the Faust representative lived on, how he speaks of Faust as the hero of invincible idealism, how in the Faust personality there is something that could only have been born out of Central European activity, how something that had developed out of a people over centuries rose to become an image of the striving human being. And much of this can be understood from the account given by Schröder in his book *Goethe and Love*.¹⁴ In it he speaks about Goethe in a peculiar way. In what he says about the individual female figures who came into contact with Goethe, and about the way in which Goethe related to these personalities, something is given which is one of the most subtle observations we have in literature. When you read this, you can see how Schröder relates to his whole time, for example when he says (in the introduction to *Goethe and Love*):

"By stating this, we must of course waive the consent of those who have the right to do so.



Schröder, around the age when R. Steiner met him (1879)

deny the existence of a moral world. We know that a large part of our generation has already grown up in views that do not want to recognize that world as an organism in itself, and even want to regard this non-recognition as freethinking. According to this view, every work of art, every work of creative human spirit, is something *merely* material, as is the spirit itself, because the former comes into view through matter, the latter, as far as we can perceive, only lives itself out in the un earthly, physically existing human being. We have no hope of communicating with this crude form of materialism. It excludes ideas as well as ideals and thus also everything that Goethe and Schiller gave us. We can only speak to those who recognize that in the moral world, even if it must make use of physical means in order to appear, it is not governed by physical laws, but is rather recognized by the fact that it is an organism that exists through laws that are not physical ones. It was a great time when the spirit of Plato gave to the word Idea that higher meaning to which only a spirit like his could soar; it was also a great time when the German spirit rose to it and gave the understanding of the word Idea.

to perceive ideas was called reason."¹⁵ That was the time of Goethe. He felt how in it

something of Platonism, of an understanding of the world of ideas, came to life again. And actually, you can't understand this whole period if you don't have a sense of how human personalities descended from earlier times who lived in Plato's time. Something like the whole Goethe era, like the appearance of so many personalities at that time, cannot be understood at all if we only want to explain it from these people as they lived in the previous and penultimate century, but only through the re-emergence of personalities who are connected with the Platonic era. One senses how Schröer has an extraordinarily fine understanding of this; but one also feels how he recoils, as it were, from the outer material world. But he is able to speak in a delicately sensuous way about the connection between Goethe's soul and the individual female personalities. One can only understand this if one says to oneself: the Platonic Eros has risen again, resurrected in a contemplation that is applied to the Goethe world.

The extent to which Schröer lived in an element from which he was able to renew Greekness on German-Austrian soil, but could not fully incorporate it into earthly culture, can be seen from a lecture entitled "The Germans of Austria-Hungary and their significance for the monarchy", which he gave on January 16, 1879 at the German Association in Vienna. Schröer lived at a time when the separation of Austrian territory from Germany meant that the Germans living in Austria were involved in a conflict with other peoples, with the Germans in Austria.

They were connected by Germanness. And Schröer had the feeling that the Germans had a high, idealistic task, that it was precisely on German soil that something like the high momentum that had emerged in German idealism had arisen; that the culture that had resulted from this could mean something for the whole world, and that it had to be continued. He felt it was his task that something like this had to happen in Austria in particular. He gave an account in which he tried to describe all the national difficulties in Austria; he described how the individual nations demanded to have their own schools. He even describes what a *free spiritual life* is, what the schools should look like, how they are simply demanded by the circumstances of the time, schools in which teaching is done in a free spiritual way. It would already become clear, he says, which schools could live on, namely those that could combine themselves with the German language, in which the wonderful works of art and literature of the German spirit are laid down, and how they would stand in a completely different way as a result. He actually gives a description of a free spiritual life, as it should have developed in Austria at that time, where many nations were called upon to solve this enormous problem - and did not solve it. He spoke in a peculiar way about this Austria of that time and said:

"The German will not ask any nation to give up its nationality. Nationality is so much a part of human nature that one cannot do without it; least of all if, like the German, one has a share in spiritual goods that are dear to the whole world."¹⁶

He then spoke of how the commonality of German intellectual life, which developed in Goethe's time, is the most precious asset that must be cultivated, and that a moral idea must be developed in Austria, because it has an educational effect, and the cultural task of Germans in Austria is such an idea. But then he talks about how this Austria does not actually offer the possibility of realizing such an idea. He tells a story as a comparison: a master builder once had to build a Gothic church, but he was unable to complete the construction because he died beforehand. He was only able to make the sacrament house. Oesterreich also appears to him as such a sacrament house. And the strange lecture ends with the sentence: "It's probably not forever."

This shows how Schröer was able to speak in a fruitful way about the task that the intellectual life of the Goethe era must have an effect on social life in Austria, shaping the entire culture, right up to the question of nationality. And suddenly, at the end, he says: "Austria is actually such an obstructed cathedral; there is nothing left but to erect the sacrament house and otherwise to take care of it."

Rudolf Steiner on platonic love

At the same time, another element enters Plato's world view, which has also become known to the world in a catchphrase that has been much misunderstood and also much misused: in the catchphrase of Platonic love. The spiritual love that has shed as much as possible of the egoism that is often still mixed in with love, this spiritual devotion to the world, life, man, God, idea, that is something that pervades the Platonic view of life. And that is what recedes in certain ages, but then always shines through again. For Platonism is taken up again and again, forming here and there the thing that people climb up to (...).

Rudolf Steiner, GA 238, Lecture of September 23, 1924.

Karl Julius Schröer on the world of ideas

It was a great time when the spirit of Plato gave to the word Idea that higher meaning to which only a spirit like his could soar; it was also a great time when the German spirit rose to it and called the ability to perceive ideas Reason.

K.J. Schröer, *Die Deutsche Dichtung des 19. Jahrhunderts in ihren bedeutenderen Erscheinungen*, Leipzig 1875.

that perhaps the realization of such an idea would have been possible after all. You will feel what Dr. Steiner meant by "flinching", and the Schröer personality can be shown in various ways how she built such "sacrament houses".

Schröer spoke about Goethe from many different angles, especially about his poetry. With reference to Goethe's scientific writings, however, he felt how difficult it was to come to terms with today's natural science. He therefore welcomed with great pleasure the arrival of this young man, Rudolf Steiner, to whom he was able to entrust the task of working on Goethe's scientific writings¹⁷. It is interesting to note what Schröer himself writes in the introduction to these scientific writings, for he prefaces them with a foreword in which he welcomes, as it were, the undertaking of this then still very young man of 23, and one has the feeling: how fatherly he is paving the way for this undertaking! He uses strange words:

"It seems to me beyond all doubt that the divine spark of genius is just as recognizable in Goethe's scientific writings as it is in his poems. Gifts of genius are always precious. Science has enough workers, but few inspiring spirits. If Goethe had worked as an academic teacher and had trained pupils who had penetrated his views more intimately, he would have

his school would have gained great importance, if only because of the connection with the overall development of science and intellectual life in Germany, from which Goethe's endeavors grew.

Now, of course, things are still such that those who stand up for him have to swim against the tide.

We have already *begun* to understand and explain Goethe's poetry from the whole of his nature and from the totality of his writings. His *scientific writings* have not yet benefited from such a treatment.

I therefore welcome with pleasure the undertaking of the publisher of his present scientific writings.

Starting out from scientific studies, I see him attracted by Goethe's personality. He devotes himself to the study of his writings with devoted enthusiasm. He comes to the realization that they can only be judged in the context of the whole of his being. He recognizes that the key to Goethe's entire thought is to be found in the intellectual life of his time. Although Goethe is not to be taken as a philosopher, he appears to have been inspired by the philosophical currents of the time and to have had an effect on them. The editor does not refrain from striving for a clear view of the historical in this direction as well, drawing from direct sources.

Even if I do not want to allow myself to enter the field of natural science," - note these words - "I cannot deny the concession that the self-consistent consistency which I see emerging in all this endeavor must be a guarantee for me, that the explanations with which Goethe's scientific writings are accompanied must necessarily become a furtherance of their understanding such as we have not yet had, a furtherance which the prudent reader will thank the editor for, even if he could not agree in every respect."¹⁸

One senses how Schröer himself feels it is a tragedy that he cannot enter the field of natural science, but how he looks with extraordinary gratitude at the personality who is studying with him and who now enters into the presentation of Goethe's scientific writings in a strange way. This shows how Schröer did not have the ability to put himself in the position of a scientific approach, and how he was also unable to carry his Platonism down to the enormous resistance of modern natural science, according to which the whole of today's culture is formed. And just as he could only put up a "sacrament house" with regard to the social problem in Eastern Europe and then turned back with a gesture of resignation, so it is with Goethe's scientific writings: there too he can only erect a sacrament house and must leave the expansion to others.

Now it is interesting to see how he lived in Austria. For a large part of his life he traveled everywhere where the "German language islands" were. He had a strange love for the German dialects, he studied them with a touching devotion, visited every village in such areas, got to know the customs of the farmers, studied exactly how the German language had developed there. And what drove him was expressed in the following thought: Just as the islands, the Cyclades and Sporades, are scattered throughout Greece, the small German language islands are scattered throughout Austria in the area that already extends to Hungary and Czechoslovakia; you have to turn there, so to speak, and connect with these Sporades. He uses this expression again and again. And in the introduction to the German literary history¹⁹ he says something quite strange. It begins like this:

"Just as we must envy those Illyrian-Macedonian neighbors of the ancient Greeks that they were able to hear and learn daily the Greek sounds, the language of a people who seemed to elevate mankind to the status of gods; in the same way, when the German people, who have so much in common with the ancient Greeks, have become extinct after centuries - they will envy the neighbors of the Germans that they can not only hear German, but also learn it with such ease and acquire the treasures of German literature. (If we compare Germany with ancient Greece and Germany with the Greek states, we find a great similarity between Austria and Macedonia. We see the beautiful task of Austria in one example

before us: *spreading the seeds of Western culture to the East*)."

Again and again you will find this peculiar comparison of Greekism with Germanism. He does not speak of Germanness merely as a nation, but compares what has emerged as an intellectual culture from German idealism with what has emerged from Hellenism. And when he traces the German language islands, he does so in the same way as when he traces the spread of German intellectual life among the "barbarians".

This impulse also led him to find the *Christmas plays*. Those old Christmas plays had already died out or become trivial in Germany proper. They had survived in places where German was isolated from the general German-speaking world and had preserved its old ways. Schröer traveled to Oberufer, to Pressburg (on the Danube, not far from Vienna), went to the farmers who lived there, and from the last people who were still there and knew about the Christmas games, he learned how such games were played. He had them tell him every single one. And this was then passed on to Rudolf Steiner in personal conversations, so that these old German Christmas games were preserved through the continuity of *one individual*. Schröer sought out these areas, driven to a certain extent by his spirit, which was directed towards the ideal, searching everywhere for traces of this German-Germanic essence as it had developed over the course of time.

It is interesting how he repeatedly uses these peculiar comparisons throughout his literary history. At first you don't even notice it. Then you ask yourself: how does he keep making comparisons with Greece? He speaks of the German intellectual life of Goethe's time, which we are now beginning to forget, as being comparable to ancient Hellenism. Yes, he speaks of the spirit of Plato in comparison with the Goethean age.

Schröer has grown out of a familiar milieu in a strange way. He was born in Bratislava, where his parents lived. Schröer had the strange fate of remaining basically unknown. Who knows anything about Karl Julius Schröer today? Schröer lived until 1900; he was the last of the Goetheanists to die in Vienna in 1900. The last period of his life was such that he was no longer in full possession of his mental powers. Dr. Steiner said of this: "Because the Plato soul could not fully incarnate, it withdrew from the body as Schröer grew older. One has the feeling that only very little of the subtlety that lived in this soul could be fully expressed in Schröer; infinitely much that is beautiful and wonderful is felt to have been held back, as the significant impulses are only hinted at, as it were. So it is something tragic when one looks at Schröer's fate.



Eugen Kolisko, 1893 - 1939

What else could you do... ?

Thus we see how, in the actually quite forgotten Schröer, Goetheanism has come to a standstill at the gates of intellectualism transformed into spiritualism. What else could one actually do, if one is, I would say, inspired by Schröer, but continue to carry Goetheanism into anthroposophy! There was nothing else to do, so to speak. And I often had this moving picture before my soul's eye of how Schröer brings the old spirituality to Goethe, how it can penetrate into intellectualism, and how Goethe must be grasped again with modern intellectualism elevated into the spiritual in order to actually understand him completely. (...) What else could be done but to remove the stagnation that had occurred and to really lead Goetheanism over into anthroposophy!

Rudolf Steiner, GA 238, Lecture of September 23, 1924.

Rudolf Steiner recognized this: It was not *his* destiny, it was Schröer's destiny, to convey Goethe's view of natural science, revitalized, to the fading 19th century (...) Rudolf Steiner thus took over an inner worldview work that Schröer had to do, into his own soul (...) Thus he decided, initially putting aside his own mission, to do what the world needed; he took over Schröer's mission. "When I made this decision at that time, I experienced the feeling of freedom. I was able to write my *philosophy of freedom* because I had experienced what freedom is."

W.J. Stein/Rudolf Steiner, *Dokumentation eines wegweisenden Zusammenwirkens*, Dornach 1985, p. 293ff. [See also: *Der Europäer*, Vol. 1, No. 12 (October 1997), p. 7ff].

When he was at the beginning of his activity, he was surrounded by a large number of people who thought like him, who were connected with Goethe's spiritual view of the world. Schröer was, so to speak, the last of all Goetheanists - from a time when there were still thousands of people who had the kind of spiritual life described for the circle of people who appear in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, of whom one has the impression that such a level of refinement of spiritual life, of delicacy of feeling, no longer exists today! Schröer went through all this and was the last one left. It is quite tragic to think of the time of the Vienna Goethe Society, which Schröer founded and whose journal he edited, in which articles still appeared that spoke of Goethe as we are accustomed to. One actually feels transported into the spirit of anthroposophy - into the spirit as it then emerged from the Goethe Association.

is suppressed, so that from 1900 onwards people begin to pass judgment on Goethe, e.g. on Goethe as a scientist. Thus one sees how the last personality of Goetheanism ceases to have an effect. At that time, the continuity of the connection with the spiritual world was based on only *one* person, Rudolf Steiner. One can understand how Schröer went through the whole downfall of Goetheanism; one can understand, as Dr. Steiner explained, that the whole time of Hegel, Schelling, etc., is after all only an evening glow of culture - and not a culture that can penetrate materialistic culture, as can be seen from the fact that such personalities appear in it who, like Plato, cannot cope with the effects of material culture precisely because of the kind of spirituality of their earlier life. You can just feel why Hegel's time is a "sunset" when you look at the circumstances under which the Plato soul incarnates.

(Conclusion in the February issue)

- 1 Guenther Wachsmuth (4.10.1893 - 2.3.1963), appointed secretary and treasurer of the AAG by Rudolf Steiner during the 1923/24 Christmas Conference, also appointed head of the Natural Science Section at the Goetheanum.
- 2 Christmas Conference December 1923/January 1924.
- 3 Rudolf Steiner, *Esoterische Betrachtungen karmischer Zusammenhänge*, GA 235-40. See also the lectures given during the Christmas Conference 1923/24 in Dornach, *Die Weltgeschichte in anthroposophischer Beleuchtung und als Grundlage der Erkenntnis des Menschengesistes*, GA 233.
- 4 GA 238.
- 5 See especially the background to the fate of Otto Weininger, GA 238, lecture of September 21, 1924.
- 6 GA 238, lecture of September 23, 1924.
- 7 Hroswitha of Gandersheim, born around 935 in Lower Saxony, died in Gandersheim after 975, aged 40.
- 8 e.g. Otto the Great, 912-973.
- 9 "Sapientia". Hroswitha's last drama.
- 10 See: Hroswitha von Gandersheim, *Werke*, Paderborn 1939.
- 11 e.g. in: *Mysteries of the Orient and Christianity*, GA 144, lecture of February 6, 1913.
- 12 K.J. Schröer, *Goethe's Faust*, Vol. I and II, Leipzig 1907.
- 13 Schröer himself also refers to Hroswitha von Gandersheim in this context.
- 14 K.J. Schröer, *Goethe und die Liebe*, Stuttgart 1922; today: Goetheanum Verlag, Dornach 1989.
- 15 K.J. Schröer, *Goethe und die Liebe*, Stuttgart 1922, p. 12; Dornach 1989, p. 9.
- 16 K.J. Schröer, *Die Deutschen in Oesterreich-Ungarn und ihre Bedeutung für die Monarchie*, Vienna 1879, page 22.
- 17 GA 1.
- 18 *Goethe's Scientific Writings*, edited by Rudolf Steiner, vol. 1, 3rd ed. Bern 1949, XIII p.
- 19 *History of German Literature*, Pest 1853, p. 9.

The Plato soul in history

Lecture by Eugen Kolisko on November 8, 1925

Conclu

sion

The second and final part of Eugen Kolisko's contemplation of Schröer also sheds particular light on Schröer's important parents, his mother Therese (née Langwieser) and his father Tobias Gottfried Schröer, who wrote numerous historical and educational books under the pseudonym "Chr. Oeser". In the same lecture on Schröer, which Kolisko based his observation on (23.9.1924, GA 238), R. Steiner also made a highly important karmic comment on Schröer's father, as if in passing. This was apparently not included in the shorthand notes, but was reported in later editions of these lectures on the basis of several listeners' notes. This note has the following wording: "According to lecture participants, Rudolf Steiner mentioned Christian Oeser, the father of Karl Julius Schröer, as the reincarnation of Socrates.

*Oeser's **World History** (cf. note 22) contains grandiose brief descriptions of the personality of Socrates and the philosophy of Plato, Socrates' student (see box on page 7). Aristotle, on the other hand, is - contrary to the erroneous recollection*

Kolisko's assumption - merely mentioned in passing as Alexander's teacher.

Even with regard to Oeser, who died in 1850, Steiner's references have unfortunately not yet led to his important writings - Kolisko sees in them nothing less than

"the foundations of a world history from a spiritual point of view" - in an unchanged but annotated form. Insightful sponsors would be needed here, because in view of the general lack of interest in serious spiritual-scientific-karmic considerations and also in view of the promotion of pseudo-occult experiences, even within wide circles of the current anthroposophical movement, such an undertaking can hardly be profitable from a purely economic point of view. But that it represents a spiritual necessity, indeed an unfulfilled obligation towards Steiner's karma research - no one with insight can remain in doubt about this.

Thomas Meyer

Schröer came from a peculiar background. His father and mother also lived in Bratislava. Now he had the fate of remaining completely unknown. But it was similar with Hroswitha's personality: she was later completely denied for a while. And it is interesting that at the time when Schröer lived in Vienna, a researcher named Aschbach appeared who wrote a book denying that the personality of Hroswitha had ever lived and claiming that the writings under her name had been invented and compiled by a humanist, Celtes²⁰, who lived in the court of Emperor Maximilian. It is curious that this was claimed at the very time when Schröer himself was living and also in the same city. He talks about it at one point in his writings and makes fun of it. And this tragic fate of being misjudged can often be seen in the Plato entity. It even occurs in the milieu of the Schröers family itself. Schröer's father, Tobias Schröer, lived in Bratislava as an educator at an educational institution²¹. He wrote numerous works with pedagogical content, for example a world history²², which is extremely interesting and gives the impression that it actually contains the foundations of a world history from a spiritual point of view. I had a special experience with this world history - if I may say something personal. Some time ago, I picked it up, looked at the book and realized to my amazement that I almost knew it by heart, because it was the book from which I had once learned world history myself, which was



Karl Julius Schröer (11.1.1825 - 16.12.1900)

had completely slipped my mind. In this world history, the events are presented in a wonderful way; the chapters where Plato, Aristotle²³ and Christianity are discussed are among the most beautiful. This is particularly the case in the first editions; the later editions then became worse and worse, and it is peculiar that this is the case with all of Tobias Schröer's writings. He has written many works for the education of young people, e.g. a *consecration gift for virgins*, in which he gives a kind of aesthetics, using the basics of Schiller-Goethe's aesthetics in such a way as is possible for teaching purposes. He then wrote other works, which he had to publish under a pseudonym, "Chr. Oeser", just like the *Weltgeschichte*.

Why? Because he was persecuted by the Austrian government. He had written a comedy in which the person of State Chancellor Metternich appeared. However, this was not looked upon very kindly by the Austrian government, so from then on Tobias Schröer could only write under a pseudonym. He then also wrote a very interesting drama about the Hungarian freedom hero Tököly. Schröer himself said of this drama, and Dr. Steiner repeats this in his book *Vom Menschenrätsel*,²⁴ that it is one of the best works of Hungarian literature in German, but that it has not become very well known as such.

Schröer's father wrote a large number of writings under various names, which are of great importance, but he has been completely forgotten, partly because it is not known under which name he wrote. Those youthful writings then had the fate that, although they can still be found today, they now look completely different. For example, Tobias Schröer wrote a very beautiful book, an educational theory for young girls; at the beginning it contains explanations on aesthetics, and the whole thing is then linked to a kind of household book. That's how it was at first. Later it became a kind of cookery book, and in the end the introduction was omitted, so that it was just a cookery book.

This Tobias Schröer can actually only be understood from the sphere of Platonism. If you follow this personality, you will see that he wrote wonderful things, which were then taken over and flattened by later editors. Schröer himself once wrote about his father's works and said that he didn't really want to read them anymore because it made his heart ache when he saw what had been made of them.

Schröer's mother is also interesting²⁵, who also wrote many things; our member Mr. Picht has found these writings again²⁶. And especially when

"Speak the truth straight out ..."

Chr. Oeser on Socrates and Plato

The following excerpts are taken from: *Kurzer Leitfaden der allgemeinen Weltgeschichte für Töchter Schulen und zum Privatunterricht*, 2nd ed. Leipzig 1844

From: § 10 *Pericles and Aspasia*

(...) *Pericles* alone was also seized by this plague and could not be saved despite the care of his *Aspasia*. In the meantime, the war continued, lasted a full 28 years with varying degrees of success and ended with the capture of Athens. Although the Athenians managed to regain their freedom, they never regained their former greatness, and from this time onwards, Athens and the whole of Greece lost their true education and morals, their good taste and virtue; their love of freedom became licentiousness, their bravery wild belligerence.

§ 11 *Socrates*

In this [sic] general corruption of morals, the wise *Socrates* arose in Athens, who undertook to lead educated youths to the knowledge of truth and virtue by example and teaching. Although he thought and believed in only one god, he spared the dominant popular beliefs and always spoke of several gods. The way he taught, however, was quite unique; he used to develop the truth from the souls of his students by asking many questions, conversationally. *Socrates* thus educated several excellent men, but the common people themselves did not understand him, and the rulers of the Republic, who after the Peloponnesian War were nothing less than virtuous men, hated him because they feared that his disciples would one day oust them from power and spread virtue and reason among the people in place of vice and sensuality; for a virtuous and reasonable people, they thought, cannot be ruled by evil-doers. Therefore they accused *Socrates* and claimed that he despised the gods and corrupted the youth. Thus

this virtuous man was actually conscripted and sentenced to death by his unworthy judges. He emptied the cup of poison after a cheerful conversation with his friends about the immortality of the soul without fear or trepidation, but his death brought the people to their senses, for they regretted having ordered this execution, punished the judges and erected a statue to *Socrates*. Among his students, *Xenophon* and *Plato* stood out, who have passed on the spirit of his teachings to us in their writings. What were *Socrates*' most outstanding doctrines?

§ 13 *Plato*

Plato was a poet in his youth, *Socrates* led him to philosophy. After the death of his teacher, whom he was unable to save, he traveled to Africa and from there to Lower Italy, where he became acquainted with the teachings of *Pythagoras*. When *Dionysius*, tyrant of Syracuse, heard of his arrival in Sicily, he invited him to visit him because, for all his imperiousness, he also had the vanity to want to be considered a friend of the sciences. *Plato* came, but was not at all afraid to speak the truth straight out in his lectures. This frankness infuriated the tyrant, who dismissed the philosopher but ordered the boatman who took him to Greece to sell him as a slave. This also happened on the island of Aegina, but *Plato* was immediately ransomed by foreign merchants who knew him. He then went to Athens, and because he did not like the constitution of the state, he bought the garden of a certain *Akademios* (which was therefore called the *Academy*) in order to teach friends of wisdom there, like *Socrates*. He went to Sicily once more when *Dionysius* the Younger came to power, but soon left, for he could no more transform him than his father into a wise and benevolent prince. Returning to Athens, he moved back into his *academy*, lived there in quiet seclusion and died a serene old man, 83 years old, loved by his own and honored by all of Greece.

How did the Greeks reward their teachers?

If you look at this personality, you can be very moved by it, because this mother of Schröer's is one of the most likeable personalities we can find in the history of the time. This woman also lived in Bratislava, and if you look at this Schröer house, you will find that it was like an island of Goethean intellectual life at the time. She had an extraordinarily warm, intimate relationship with the German writer Karl von Holtei. He also lived there for a long time in Schröer's house, he was

was very friendly with Schröer's father and also with his son, who was still very young at the time. He had an extensive correspondence with this woman. He published some of these letters as *letters from Mrs. Therese*, without mentioning her name. And because these letters spoke so subtly about all of life's problems, the result was that he received letters from everywhere asking who this "Mrs. Therese" was. He later published some of these letters (most of them were burned by her) together with his son Schröer after Mrs. Therese's death.

and it is extremely interesting to read this book in particular. Her comments on pedagogical questions are particularly beautiful. She describes the upbringing of her son Karl Julius Schröer from the very beginning; she describes this upbringing from day to day. These remarks are gems of pedagogy. It is wonderful how she depicts the entire childhood of little Karl Julius in the way she brought him up. It reveals a milieu of which one can say: this Plato-soul could not have lived in any other milieu than this one! You will also feel this when I read something to you from these letters. She writes:²⁷

"When I was once asked whether I thought it advisable to show all our love to the children, I exclaimed: 'Dear God, where have we got to that such a question could be invented? Of course, we must show the children our love, the whole, great love - show it like sunrise and sunset, like stars and moon and everything that is not of the earth. Father, what will you use to crush your son, who rebels against you, if he has never seen your love, your love that cannot be compared to anything else? But if he knows it, then place your anger alongside it, and his fright will throw him repentantly at your feet. But apart from the power that love gives, I ask you parents, what is it for, if you do not want to show it, what has God given it to you for? Not to do secret things with it? Do you think that when you care, nurture, teach and educate, you love? But I say: you are doing your duty and nothing more, and the child cannot thank you for fulfilling it, at least not yet. It must learn if it wants to play, and it should melt away in gratitude. Then the poor thing hears



Tobias Gottfried Schröer (1791-1850) as a student

always speak of parental love and wait, wait, so that it may appear to him face to face, until the time has passed when it can work and reign in all its charm. Oh, do not deprive the poorest of the first, seven-year-long Christian evening; let it flow, the fountain of love, that it may flow in the broad bed, enliven it with colorful little ships of freshly invented children's joys. Otherwise you will never bring the love of your whole heart to the man if you do not give it to the dear little ones, and you will have to take it with you to the grave. Don't listen when people say that children can't stand love; how absurd that sounds. They can't really tolerate anything but love, and even we grown-ups can't tolerate anything better and more beneficial for our development than love.

(...) Whenever I saw a poor woman, bent down with work, embrace and kiss her little child, I wept with joy and always gave the good girl a gift straight away. Oh, if only I could buy love for all the little children; they can't say how they want it!"

Then she talks about how upset she got about being punished when little Karl Julius did something wrong once, and how she brought him up with individual educational measures. It's actually very strange what she reports. I'll just read out one scene. The boy had done something bad; it was the first time, and now she didn't know what to do. So she locked him in the room, and now the story goes:

"(...) He was still screaming, finally weaker, then he became quiet. I was very uncomfortable, and it would have been much easier for me to talk; nevertheless, I recognized in this case a moment of development that should be taken into consideration, and I persevered. "What are you doing?" said my husband when he came in and found me listening at the door. 'Oh God, I think I'm raising you,' I replied, crying. I looked through the keyhole and saw him playing with a piece of string. I would have liked to take him to my heart, but I didn't allow myself to. An hour had passed for me like a day - for my little one like an eternity, and exhausted from crying and worn out with anger, he lay down on the ground and fell asleep again. No one was allowed to notice him."

Then she describes how she gets close to the boy and how he, through that moment of disregard, no longer does the other thing. She goes on to describe such small actions, e.g:

"But what is the consequence of parental fear in children? - The lie - the cunning and so on, right up to deceit. 'Who broke my beautiful bowl?' I asked. 'I dropped it,' replied my Luise. 'What a pity, you have deprived me of a dear memento; take care another time. There she stood, her eyes moist, her cheeks crimson. 'Who took the piece of melon from the plate in my room, was it you, Julius?' 'I thought nobody wanted it. - 'You should have asked-

should have.' (In the best tone): 'You don't have to take anything without asking; how could this happen *to you*? It is punishment enough for such an offense and the only effective one; it still leaves my children their full innocence, because the awareness of having done a pronounced wrong tarnishes this innocence, and this must be prevented so that the sense of guilt, like the sense of honor, can fully grow as a seedling in order to develop full, rich shoots one day.'

And in another passage, she talks about the time when youth is going through a period like sexual maturity, when it needs particularly gentle and mild guidance. She says:

"Young people have periods of transition; they need protection and gentle guidance. Often they walk a narrow, perilous road like moonstruck addicts; what is the use of fiery polarization? We are only allowed a wave; they must neither be pushed nor shoved through the gateway from one stage of life to another. We must give them peace, love and self-denial as guides in our monitoring. If we think we are tiring, sinking into complete exhaustion of heart, say to ourselves: 'Tomorrow, with God's help, it can be different! And it often is. One hour, one day, and our daughter, our son, has shed the chrysalis and the psyche spreads its young wings towards us. The misleading phenomena of development are innumerable. But they are only *phenomena* and will pass if we do not petrify them with violence, defiance and coldness. The perfectly successful, lovable child is left to wander, to the joy of God and man; but where its talent is still doubtful, or even repulsive, it is up to the parents to do what no one but they can do, and what raises the power of their love above every hero and every heroism, namely: to choose just *this* child to be the child of their most parental love, their most zealous care, their most kind indulgence. There is no such neglected creature on whom such sacrifice would have remained without blessing, and the parents can console themselves with the beautiful song: 'If everyone is unfaithful, we remain *faithful*.'"

The most remarkable thing about this personality is what she herself wrote about Goethe; this is one of the strangest things you can find in German literature. Only when you know her do you understand where Schröer came to honor Goethe, and how this house in Pressburg, in "Austrian Macedonia", could become the place where the Schröer personality, this reincarnated Plato soul, could develop, this teacher personality, without which we again cannot imagine the work of anthroposophy. This woman writes - every sentence is Platonism and at the same time Goetheanism:

About the work of our master poet

Now I've read Goethe and feel like im-

mer, strengthened, reconciled, after enjoying this bread of life. How much has already been said and written about Goethe! How much! Too much! And I mean: still not the right thing. If it were given to me, I would say it with dignified expression, and that should be a word worthy of thanks. Not a confusing, argument-challenging one.

I lack the strength, the power, I must remain silent and overcome my inability with heavy sighs.

But there is one truth of which I am too certain, and therefore I dare to speak it, namely that Goethe, in the whole field of his research, found no material for poetry as noble as *he himself was*.

The extraordinary will also become extraordinary. His century is yet to come, and in the midst of it his understanding, a Messiah, will arise and work. His human greatness is too close to the present, and those closest to him were too caught up in this greatness. This time his Swiss journey of 1797 and the journey along the Rhine and Main in 1814 and 15 came to hand. This is the third time I have read them. The first time as very attractive, the second time as instructive, but now no longer as something that brings out individual impressions, embellished by special merits. I also lack the ear for so-called language, because the content touches the depths of my soul, which a b s o r b s this high satisfaction with true devotion. Of course, the spirit of our time works in the hand of such dignity when our fast writers, fast talkers, fast livers, fast learners and fast knowers have martyred us so thoroughly; when we would like to flee to the grave from such green wisdom so as not to be witnesses to a hustle and bustle whose motto is: to have no reverence for anything! To think oneself beyond all that has been thoroughly learned, so that one may not work oneself into it!

Doubting the master is suddenly beyond the effort of studying his notebooks.

When one is so full of weariness, of grief, it is best to take up one of Goethe's prose writings and let the world, people and life, from all of which we were just about to turn away contemptuously, be illuminated by *this* sun of day, *this* moon of night, in order to forgive all those for His sake, because we can hope in Him. His way must become a teaching, and once he has acquired disciples, the golden age is close at hand. To be an imitator is otherwise a disgrace. To be an imitator of Goethe is an honor and a gain for everyone, even for those whose powers do not reach up to him. He points out the right louder track for everyone, gives exercise and development to every disposition, and therefore he builds and fertilizes incessantly. Is he an egoist, they say? Shame on those who say so! It is also a vice of our time to throw out opinions and judgments before we have reached complete understanding. Look for his truly divine self-denial when he faces anything human!

If *your* life, which you want to call him an egoist, lay before us [like] an open book, as is the case with Goethe's life, then you would, often ashamed, reduce your vaunted humanity and love of mankind in its work and activity to a few townspeople.

but as soon as partisanship and other people's opinions touch your stuff, you see the same love of mankind rebelling in drooling revolt, only to possibly force those who think differently around to your opinion in excessive zeal.

I am not saying that Goethe loved people; that is not saying enough.

Goethe respected people! And respect is above love.

Any good person can achieve love; a respectable person is always also a gifted person.

But no one who has ever lived can be more clearly shown to have had true respect for everything that came from man and had an effect on him than Goethe. And woe to the softened generation, which is only ever pining for love, without finding the most uplifting happiness in respect, and in *such* respect.

His soul and his heart were accessible and open to everything; he only spared time and energy for his work; and it was a large circle that he drew around it. (...) Should he have married Friederike and Lilli? - You good people, who feel so much obliged to marry and think you have done everything by doing so - we should probably let Friederike and Lilli, who both later married out of inclination, decide for themselves? Let *them* decide whether *they* should gratefully accept this childhood dream, which elevated them and gave them the sweetest happiness of their lives along with its pain, or whether it would have been more desirable to graze the Junker flower garden and keep it as winter hay? If our first love ennobled us too highly, if it gave us such beautiful immortality, then we have lost our happiness, our reward. To follow the great path of the once-beloved on and on - proudest bliss! And far preferable to the dull and weary indifference of many a premature marriage!



Therese Schröer (1804 -1885)

Goethe faced God and the world as an honest man and paid for everything with hard cash. He took no pleasure, not even the smallest, as such; he extracted something from it and laid it down for those who came after him.

He should not have turned his back on politics, on the interests of the time?

Nor did he. But he did not turn to the parties that seemed petty to him; none of them could say: he is an *unrighteous man*. And that choked them. He who carries the world in his heart often seems cold to those who 'live in the country'. He did not take to his heart all those who longed for it. This was again his high regard for himself and for people. Only the chosen ones can be given to themselves. Blessed is he who leaves such a legacy to the world from his wealth as Goethe's works are!

One of the most important women who ever lived, Goethe's first admirer and truest admirer, Rahel²⁸, avoided any personal approach with holy timidity. 'Why disturb him? He creates for us! And true admiration likes to stay far away. Whoever intends to undertake something, be it for the individual or for the general, and finds a motto for this undertaking in a personal saying of Goethe's, should boldly go about his work, for it will be a good one!

(...) "He loved the courts, the great ones!" - He loved what was to be loved. But not many speak of him as a 'burgher and builder' with the reverence with which Goethe knew how to honor it. Everywhere he sought out bourgeois prosperity, and there is no mistaking his pure joy where he found it. How he grieved at the mismanagement of bourgeois property and rights! How he praises where both are cultivated! It seems to him no condescension to pass in one and the same hour from the highest objects of art to the illumination of a well-kept country. No, no, he is a real, whole man.

(...) In the present work I now hear him speak about objects of art: how mild is his censure, how he respects what attests to diligence, how he rejoices in the successful! Never the mendacious phrases of the art judge: a truly touching sensitivity for a possible overlooking and under-appreciation. He blesses every work, as it were, through the respect with which he approaches it; but this is the expression of genuine human love, respect for the creature.

(...) He usually addresses the word to his friend Meyer²⁹. How beautiful this relationship is: with what warmth it is recognized and cultivated by Goethe!

In his travel diary, the witty remarks are merely laid down for further consideration and use, and we must be surprised not to find some of them exhaustively worked through in any of his own works. For example, 'Reflections on the Clergy's Clarity in their own Affairs and the Stupidity they Spread; of Philosophy one could almost say the reverse.

I know of no place where he would have discussed this highly fruitful topic further, and it is clear from this that he was not interested in 'being witty' if *there was no follow-up*.

His conscientious care and support of all facilities and

Forces is the most beautiful pattern for striving young men. A man can set himself the highest goal of calmness and moderation. But *all* must strive to recognize more and more his humanity and love of mankind, which is far too little understood and which always and everywhere walks by his side like the truth itself, in order to let their love and fruitful veneration take root in this knowledge.

Full recognition of Goethe would have a reconciling effect on our time. But he is far too far ahead of us, *his time is not yet here*.

But everyone who means well should point to him. Let all who have recognized him act as his apostles!

Especially with Schröer's mother, who also remained unknown, you can have the impression that in this house, where Schröer grew up, the understanding of Goethe could germinate in him. One has the impression that this was perhaps the only house where such a personality could live and find the necessary conditions for the Plato soul to have an effect on spiritual life in Austria. Everything connected with Schröer is imbued with Platonism. But it is tragic that this Schröer personality, to which we owe so much, which then - through Rudolf Steiner - flowed into the anthroposophical movement, that it is precisely this Schröer personality that must stop short of what is given by the conditions of modern civilization: the tragedy of not being able to incarnate, of not being able to descend completely into the earthly world; one must experience that. He is born into a home where the intimacy of Plato's soul can be cultivated, where the life of German idealism comes to him; but he does not have the opportunity to give to the whole of humanity what must now actually be continued; what must now be given by a personality who can place himself completely in the modern spiritual life and in modern natural science, and who is able to lead the spiritual down into the material - by a personality who must, however, have this being of Schröer as a teacher, who brings to him the study of Goethe, the fine understanding of the Goethe personality.

In this way, the Plato incarnation, which brings together all the spiritual foundations of Greek life, interpenetrates with the fine feminine nature of the Middle Ages, which in turn is completely imbued with Christianity. All of this now merges into *one* personality. This is how Schröer confronts us. We can only understand this if we look at the repeated lives on earth. And in Schröer's tragic fate, for whom the right incarnation conditions were not actually present, we can see an indication of what Rudolf Steiner wanted to express at the time, when he said that the task of the anthroposophical movement was

is to create the conditions to give such personalities as the great Platonists, as well as Plato, the opportunity to have an impact on life on earth. It is precisely when one looks at the personality of Schröer and his whole circle, when one sees this intimacy of spirit which expresses itself in the words of Mrs. Therese, and when one sees on the other hand how, despite this, something could not flow out into the whole of humanity, that one feels how necessary it was for anthroposophy to develop in the struggle with external conditions, and how precisely this struggle, which anthroposophy must fight, only offers the possibilities that such difficulties of incarnation can be resolved for the future. The spread of anthroposophy alone can create the possibility for such spiritual personalities to find their way back down into the physical world. The example of Schröer illustrates the seriousness of the karma approach. For if we feel how he was only able to build "sacramental houses" and not a large cathedral; how he was not able to fully introduce what he had previously experienced in the spiritual worlds into today's culture, but how a confrontation with the entire *earthly* conditions is necessary for this, then this shows us the task of the anthroposophical movement: To pave the way for the great spiritual personalities who are connected with Plato and his disciples, to pave the way for this spiritual view also within the workings of the earth. And it is precisely in the contemplation of Plato's being that we find how the contemplation of karma can lead us to become more and more aware of the tasks of anthroposophical work.

20 Conrad Celtes, 1459-1508.

21 Tobias Gottfried Schröer (Chr. Oeser), 14.6.1791 - 2.5.1850.

22 *Weltgeschichte für Töchter Schulen und zum Privatunterricht*, 3 volumes, 2nd edition, Leipzig 1843.

Tobias Schröer, published in an unchanged edition. Also: *Kurzer Leitfaden der allgemeinen Weltgeschichte für Töchter Schulen und zum Privatunterricht*, 2nd edition, Leipzig 1844.

23 This is probably an error of memory on the part of Eugen Kolisko. Oeser ignores Aristotle, but writes a lot about Socrates.

24 Rudolf Steiner, GA 20.

25 Therese Schröer (née Langwieser), 9.5.1804 - 27.1.1885.

26 Carlo Septimo Picht (ed.), Therese Schröer: *Aus Briefen und Blättern*, Stuttgart 1928.

27 Therese Schröer, *Über praktische Kindererziehung*, Stuttgart 1958. The quotations follow this edition.

28 Rahel Varnhagen-van Ense (1771 - 1833).

29 Heinrich Meyer (1760 - 1832), art writer and friend of Goethe, whom he met in Rome in 1788.