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STORGIC LOVE

Part 1. *THE MYSTICISM OF THE MAIN ENCOUNTER OF MAN AND WOMAN*

Part 2. *THE PERSONAL SPIRITUAL LIFE OF MAN. THE MALE PATH OF ASCENT*

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AFTERWORD

Summary

In addition to erotic, philic, and agapic love, the Greek language identifies a fourth type of love – storgic love. We will reinterpret storge here, just as philosophers have long reinterpreted agape, philia and eros.

For us, storge refers to the striving for intertwining one's soul with the soul of another person so closely that the latter stops being "another person" or "another ego" and becomes "another self," with whom one can live as a single whole. The simplest illustration of storge is the myth about the existence of two souls as halves of a single whole that are released into the world in order to unite in love.

In the first part of this book, we will describe the foundations, meanings and types of storgic love.

In the second part, we will outline the principles and stages of the personal spiritual life of a man and his Paths of Ascent.

In the third part, we will speak about the woman's Path of Ascent and about the highest form of storgic love between man and woman.

I. MARDOV

STORGIC LOVE

PART 1

THE MYSTICISM OF THE MAIN ENCOUNTER OF MAN AND WOMAN

Of course, nothing gives greater joy on earth than the moments when we feel a mutual heartfelt inclination for each another.

N. Strakhov

1.

A person perceives another person not as a member of the same animal species but in the Encounter of his or her own inner world with the inner world of the other.

Having an Encounter is not the same as sharing a common living space, verbally interacting in the solidarity of a clan, social group, society, tribe, nation, etc., touching each other, growing used to each other, joining with each other or influencing each other. The Encounter is a supernatural flash of recognition involving the detection or non-detection of oneself in the other and the attraction or repulsion or, more precisely, the simultaneous attraction and repulsion of human souls. The Encounter is the reciprocal mutual extra-temporal penetration and enrichment of people's human aspects, the involuntary acceptance of something from another, the mutual exchange of vital flows, and constant mutual revivification through these flows – something that is essential for the spiritual life of every person.

All human life is made up of encounters and can be separated into encounters. We live in discrete time structured by encounters. Most people do not know what to do between encounters and live from one encounter to the next. They revive only from the Encounter.

Human wealth and poverty is the wealth and poverty of Encounters in a person's life.

The main purpose of the Encounter is to bring the inner world of man into action. The Encounter launches it. Every spark generated by the Encounter should kindle something in the inner world of man, heat it up, generate working conflicts, and overcome or create something. If this does not occur, the encounter was useless and in vain.

One must learn to treasure the Encounter as such. No encounter, whether realized or just passing, can be abolished. An encounter can last a moment yet have an impact on all one's life. A person

is responsible for every encounter – for the Encounter as such – and must see to it that the raw material of spiritual life that the Encounter offers him is not spoiled or left unused.

The Encounter always signifies that someone has entered your life in order to stay there, whether you want it or not. Separation is not an antonym of the Encounter in its metaphysical sense but one of its ploys. Every annulled Encounter is a catastrophe in the metaphysical stratum of human life.

An Encounter can be exhausted or used up in the soul. An exhausted Encounter is one of the most common and, at the same time, most painful experiences of human life. The hidden horror of the exhausted Encounter lies in the fact that no exit exists for it in the human soul. When another person enters through the open door of my soul and dies within it, he remains in my soul. Every exhausted Encounter is a corpse in the human soul.

The "encountering human being" must make a choice, because the very possibility of the Encounter opens up a prospect for him – the prospect of producing something (or someone) in the Encounter that did not exist previously.

The main Encounters in life are key existential events that have supreme value from both the spiritual and the inner (intellectual and emotional) standpoints. The canvas of one's life primarily consists of Encounters – whether face to face or at a distance, whether with contemporaries or people from the past, whether with people or other personalistic spiritual beings.

Friendship is based on the Encounter's need for the ideal experience of fidelity. The self-assertion of fidelity is the consummate manifestation of the life of the Encounter. We know about the highest form of the Encounter from our need for fidelity and from our experiences of disinterested fidelity in friendship. The latter is the clearest, purest and fullest expression of the very idea of the Encounter. Friendship is the supreme manifestation of the Encounter – of the Encounter as such.

In Friendship, every male human being transcends himself of his own accord. For many men, this is the only lofty non-egoistical experience of life – an experience that makes them want to give rather than to receive. The bright power of Friendship is mysterious insofar as it easily coexists with base motives that govern many other aspects of life.

Friendship is the loftiest and most intense manifestation of the Encounter.

Friendship is the fully realized Encounter and the fully realized ideal of the Encounter. Friendship is ideal mutuality that does not even require the friends to be compatible. They do not have to hold similar world views or have equal cultural levels and common aesthetic tastes. The friends' interests and temperaments can be totally different. Friends do not necessarily belong to the same nation or even race. Even debased and mentally disabled people can engage in friendship or recognize its value. A friend is a friend just because he is a friend.

People seek friendship, because they sense that the feeling of friendship makes their lives more profound.¹

¹ Even the relations between man and domestic animals can come to resemble friendship (surrogates of parent-child relations can also occur here). A solitary person often creates a special form of friendship with a pet. A dog will never betray you and will always remain a friend. The responsibility of an owner to his dog is (ideally) the lofty responsibility of friendship. People single out (or train) special types of animals that are capable of (or can be trained for) "friendship" with their human owner. Whether this is good or bad is a different and complicated matter.

Friendship is an inner need of man that is just as innate as the need to love and be loved. Friendship is one of the supreme inner needs of man that can be realized on its own. One must only desire friendship and seek it. Friendship only requires that an Encounter for friendship take place. Even that is not always necessary.

The manifest striving to be a friend appears around the age of five. The special value of friendship, the recognition of the sanctity of friendship, and the special attachment to the friend, who becomes more important than parents or anything else for that matter, are the first clear indicators that the ideal faculties of the soul have begun to function in a person, though not autonomously for the time being.

People become friends most often (and most easily) in their adolescence and youth or even in their childhood. Such friendship often lasts a lifetime.

Friendship harbors an enormous wealth of life experience. Man may well be created to be a friend. In any case, Friendship may be defined as an Encounter in which the inherent potential of the hostility of the Encounter is reduced to a minimum.

Circumstances, situations and events are just as important for the emergence of friendship as free choice. Friends may have simply sat side by side in school or slept on neighboring cots in the army and felt good together.

Friendship is more mysterious than love. A powerful component of love is the corporal facet that controls the whole process, assures the attraction of the opposite sex, and induces one to fall in love. As to friendship, one apparently enters it of his own accord. Friendship is freer than love - infatuation.

There is the good of Love, on the one hand, and the special wellbeing of Friendship and the wellbeing of one's entire inner world in the state of Friendship, on the other. The emotional and spiritual needs of Love and Friendship are similar and different at the same time. Friendship is, first and foremost, the fidelity of two people to one another. Without fidelity, Love falls apart. Without fidelity, Friendship does not arise.

Friendship is a miracle of human life.

Although one can give his life for a friend, this is not always the result of inner closeness and the inner mutual emotional intensity, proximity and lovingness of friendship ties. Friendship is not the loving fusion of two people. My friend can be a person that is, to all intents and purposes, foreign to me inwardly.

A friend is a close or foreign person that I made my friend. I take upon myself the responsibilities of friendship that do not depend on my friend's merits and that transcend my attitude towards him. Even if we are different as people, I trust him and believe in him as a friend.

The feeling of friendship is akin to Faith. Friendship has spiritual motives. It arises exclusively as a result of the Encounter's desire to see itself in ideal action.

A friend is a person who helps you to carry the burden of life and takes up your cross in addition to his own. In friendship, one joyfully serves another and gets spiritual fulfillment from it. This is not always the case with love. The feeling of fidelity and the feeling of Friendship are spiritual feelings.

Friendship makes people's spiritual lives more productive, promotes their spiritual growth, and gives their spiritual lives greater energy.

Friendship ennobles you just as religious feeling and the experience of Good and Well-Being.

Friendship goes hand in hand with a sense of honor based on self-respect. Friendship is spiritually aristocratic. It ennobles people. The feeling of friendship is a noble feeling. Ignoble people

may have friends yet never experience friendship. Even when they are on the brink of friendship, it ends up in disgrace.

A friend is an ideal experience—perhaps even more ideal than the experience of love-infatuation, which is always based on something transient and cloying (delight and desire). The ideal experiences of male friendship are often stronger than the ideal experiences of love for a woman and have a lower spiritual status.

It takes work to attain a spiritual status in love. Friendship is spiritual from the start.

The woman plays the leading role in the creation of Love between man and woman but not in Friendship.

Without Friendship, human life would lack a very important instrument of spiritual growth. Without Love, human life would lose its supreme meaning—not because the meaning of human life lies in love but because something is born in love that gives meaning and aim to human life. Love engenders something new and revives people.

Without Love, human life would go on yet lose its supreme meaning: it would come to resemble animal existence.

If one looks at human beings from the standpoint of the Encounter, the man is a being of Friendship, while the woman is a being of Love.

If Life is Love, then human life is Encounter and Love.

2.

Not all Life is Love, yet Love is Life. The reason is not simply that love raises the energy and fullness of life or that it is the most important manifestation of life or that it is an essential aspect and one of the main experiences of life or even that a certain Vitality is adequately expressed in the experience of love. The key point is that the sensation of life and of being alive is tantamount to the sensation of love. Love coincides with the feeling of being alive and thus is tantamount to Vitality.

Love is not a feeling or state but a Vitality in its active form. The fullness, essence and specific nature of a particular type of Vitality are fully expressed in Love. The nature of the Vitality determines the nature of Love.

Love implements co-life, in which the centers of life of two or several people combine and make up a common and unique center that does not negate its constituent centers. Intertwinement is the key notion for the process of the implementation of Love at all levels. A person receives Love in order to return it to him or her that gave it.

Love is the supreme mystery of the inner world of man. Every soul acquires greater fullness and vitality in Love. The mere fact that two people have fallen in love with one another elevates each of them inwardly, makes each of them spiritually higher and deeper than they were before, and leads them to experience Life more fully and deeply. Love revives people and makes them more alive. Such an increase in Vitality is experienced as the greatest good.

Everything that exists is alive, yet not everything that exists feels and cognizes. A living being is a being insofar as it has the sensation and consciousness of life. A living being stands out among living entities insofar as it has the sensation of life and feels itself to be alive (and, in particular, wishes itself good). Love, too, is a sensation of life, yet the desire of good (whether for oneself or for someone in particular or in general) is not love. An animal can desire good for another animal and is ready to

sacrifice itself for the latter with all the strength of attachment and sacrifice that is innate to its animal species, yet does it love?

As a sensation of being alive and of life within oneself, love can appear only in a being with a Self – in man. One cannot ascribe love to a being without a Self, i.e., a being without a designated center in itself that contains the free Author of its own self and its own life.

There is no love without the Self. The Self is not necessary to feel lust. Lust is not love. However, if lust contains a Self, then it is not just the striving for copulation but erotic love.²

One can understand Love only within the doctrine of the Encounter. Love is the mutual exchange of vital energy through a certain inner layer using a channel created by the Encounter.

An Encounter between two persons can take place at different levels. The Encounter between a man and a woman is the highest level of the Encounter that is envisaged by both the worldly and the divine nature of man. The Encounter between a man and a woman is more than an encounter between two people with Selves. On the one hand, it is a mutually enriching Encounter. On the other, it is an Encounter that involves the whole person, who participates in it in the entirety of all the aspects of his or her inner world. There is nothing in a person that cannot participate in the encounter between a man and a woman.

All living beings on Earth have a male nature and a female nature. In the human being these natures become Man and Woman. Man and Woman are the highest and totally unique level of the manifestation of male and female natures. The female nature (yet not the woman) is present in the man, while the male nature (yet not the man) is present in the woman.

Once again, the difference between man and woman lies not in the *makeup* of their inner world but in its *functioning*. The man and the woman have different bodies, yet this difference is not just physiological (this aspect is secondary) but lies in the fact that the body governs the inner worlds of the man and the woman differently. His body functions in a male way, and hers in a female way. The unique aspects of the woman as such and the man as such are determined by the flesh. The female flesh skews the woman's inner world towards the sensation of life and love, while the male flesh skews the man's inner world towards the consciousness of life and reason.

Generally speaking, the woman lives more lastingly and profoundly in the Encounter than the man. The Encounter is the main motif of the woman's spiritual life. The woman has the upper hand in the inner world of the Encounter. She plays a key role in the process of the Encounter. The woman is the master of the Encounter. She lives in the Encounter and, as its leader, has greater proficiency in it than the man. This constitutes her advantage and power over the latter. However, a woman's life can be subject to a lot more evil from her Encounters than from the other aspects of her inner life.

In its consciousness of separateness, the inner world of a person, be it a man or a woman, is closed and shut off from other souls by a semitransparent armor that is not easy to pierce. People have to breakthrough to one another – through the flesh, in particular.

² We do not employ the word “erotic” in the lewd sense that it is used today or in the platonic sense. Not so long ago, it still denoted the delight of extolling human love as such. The erotic penchant is characteristic of the human psyche during the Encounter with a person of the other sex.

Eros is a natural penetrative force without which it would be difficult for the souls of men and women to intertwine. The sexual desire of the flesh is necessary and morally justified as a powerful attractive force that brings bodies together into a single corporal rapturous whole and pierces personal barriers on the way of souls to one another. It is not unchastity that is amoral but sexual obsession in the absence of the striving towards love.

The seemingly unrelenting keenness of human sexual passion serves first and foremost the needs of the human psyche (the lower soul) and afterwards the natural necessity of the propagation of the species. The encounter at a moment of lust is directed where the flesh points – at the object of desire outside oneself. A spiritual eclipse takes place through the other – an eclipse that creates the possibility of entering into the first (erotic) engagement.

The forces of corporal life of two persons are particularly absorbed by each other at the moment when their inner worlds are absorbed by the flesh: the two persons "merge" or join through the flesh, become a single whole in which the energy of psycho-physiological life circulates from one to the other and back.

Only in the human species (and in no other being in nature!) are the special points in the male and female bodies located so adroitly that, in unperturbed coitus, the two bodies from tip to toe make up a single circle. In an ecstatic embrace, partners consciously strive to join into a circle.

The meaning of sexual relations does not lie in children or in carnal pleasure. The moral justification of sex is neither carnal pleasure, of course, nor even procreation but bodily interpenetration that facilitates inner contact between the partners and helps to launch the process of spiritual interaction. A child is literally the fruit of the fusion between a man and a woman and the result of their unity in the flesh and through the flesh. Sex for the sake of procreation is just as soulless as sex for carnal pleasure. The conception of a child should become the result of the bodily and spiritual unity of a man and a woman.

The fortress walls of spiritual separatedness begin to break down on their own in bed. It is hard to imagine what would have come of people without this possibility (provided by Nature) of intertwining souls through eros. Even the penetrative force of "platonic" love is driven by erotic energy through the lofty rejection of sexual relations.

At the moment of passion, the man loves with his soul from his body and is ready to swear eternal love, believing in it himself. However, as soon as he satiates his body, his soul immediately takes him out of the short-term experience of pseudo-love that had been brought about by his body. In contrast, after entering through the body into a state that is close to erotic love, the female soul often remains in it. Generally speaking, the female body is a lot more closely linked with inner life than the male body. In contrast to the male body, the female body is a lot more willing to carry out the orders of the soul and to serve as the instrument and tool of the soul. The woman's body serves to implement the main goal of her soul: to entwine the man around herself and to entwine herself around him.

The higher standards for female chastity are neither the result of male egoism nor, even less, a sign of the inequality of the sexes. Entwining a man around herself, the woman must entwine herself around him without ever untying. In principle, the capacity of staying entwined is given to a woman only once. In any case, the capacity of staying entwined is extremely fragile in a woman. If she entwines and untwines a time or two, this capacity breaks down, and the inner mechanism of striving for unity through the flesh begins to malfunction. A woman's flesh does not forget what has happened to her, and she and her very sensuality retain the mark of the man that attracted it onto himself.

In itself, carnal sexuality is impersonal. It can be more or less intense yet does not choose the concrete object of sexuality. Sexual relations, even in the presence of mutual feelings, have nothing to

do with love – not account of their baseness but in their essence. Sexual relations are temporary or even short-lived by their very nature. In contrast, all love, including erotic love, is love insofar as it is based on a mutual relationship of Selves that enter into timeless or extra-temporal relations.

The experience of responsibility or its presentiment is part of the experience of the Encounter and love. Erotic love requires a man and a woman to be alone while performing the supreme sacrament of the intertwining of their bodies. Shame is proper to erotic love. The latter is not shameless for the additional reason that it is implemented by Selves rather than egos or sexual partners.

The power of erotic love is selectively focused. To augment itself, it passionately desires to tap the life energy of the other and to absorb the intensity of his or her life. The freedom of exchanging lives in erotic love takes the form of the mutual freedom of greedily absorbing the psycho-physiological heat of the beloved.

The object of love-infatuation (philic love) evokes the elation of the presentiment of participating in or transferring oneself into the lofty regions of his or her life. One cannot desire to absorb the vitality of this object. The freedom of exchanging lives is implemented here as the freedom of approaching, giving and rendering oneself into the contemplative heights where the metapsychic image of the beloved abides for the loving gaze.

In itself, erotic love is greedy and self-interested. In itself, love-infatuation is disinterested and contemplative. Taken together, both faculties of love, combining and alternating, make up the experience of human self-love. Such love loves with erotic and philic love simultaneously: it takes pleasure in taking the life of the other soul and gets lofty satisfaction from giving its own life.

Love-infatuation (philic love) does not arise as a result of hard inner work. It arises simply because one is human. Philic love does not require the effort of attainment. Gratuitous, it is deified because all the boons of its life sensations are given for free.

Happiness is happiness insofar as it always occurs over and above the psycho-physiological satisfaction derived from relations with one another. Happiness is an experience that arises in philic love from a mutual explosion in the Encounter. A sort of channel arises between partners, and different kinds of vital energy travel back and forth with the sole aim of increasingly exciting, overexciting, triggering and kindling infatuation. When this process subsides (as it is prone to do) and the channel blocks up, people tend to say that time has destroyed love. In actual fact, this channel is not designed to last a long time. The souls grow weary of vibrating together, and the vibration dies away.

3.

Where does our highest inner striving to be intertwined come from?

Eve was created, because it is "not good" (Gen. 2:18) for a person to become by himself what he is intended to be. A person's inner work is never full-fledged without another person that is "suitable for him." Otherwise a person cannot become a true human being and cannot attain the spiritual bliss and good that are prepared and necessary for him.

In addition to eros, philia, and agape, the Greek language singles out a fourth type of love – storge. This term was used by the Ancient Greeks to refer to family love or the feeling of familial

affection. This word apparently also referred to the feeling of kinship as such. We will reinterpret storge here, just as philosophers have long reinterpreted agape, philia and eros.

As an encountering being, man is directed from "his own Self" to "another Self." He has a real need to integrate "his own Self" into another person, "another Self." In the final account, this need leads to the emergence of storge or "one's other Self." People formerly called this "the unity of souls" – the product of storgic feeling.

"One's other Self" is not really even a "Self" but the directedness of one person to another in implemented storge – a directedness that shows that one experiences himself through the other and the other through himself. "One's other Self" emerges in this experience of the other through oneself and of oneself through the other.

A person gives to his storgic beloved the keys of his main vital centers and, as a guarantee of their unity, entrusts his beloved to care for them. He can make do without the latter's help yet cannot make do without the storgic beloved as such, to whom he can entrust himself. And he waits for this person. He waits not for the alleviation of his own burden but for storgic wellbeing.

When two people are spiritually intertwined like two threads, regardless of whether they are up to the task or not, they attain, through this circumstance alone, a special and incomparable fullness of life, which a person can never attain on his own. The state of the intertwining of souls is a state of such wellbeing and spiritual bliss that no healthy soul could ever refuse it. Storge as such (i.e., independently of its results) is a true good and one of the highest values of life that cannot be replaced by anything else. Every human being desires it.

Storge is innate to man. He who does not strive for storge is not fully human. The human soul feels incomplete and destitute without storge.

In storge, it is not enough to understand and sense each other, to show compassion, to hold common views, or to look in the same direction. One must be *in* each other as well as making up a single whole.

Ideally, "one's other Self" is one's other experience of life (one's other experience of being alive) in the storgic beloved – his (and my) other views, feelings, life experiences, notions and thoughts. The perfect storgic partner has no solutions or desires of mutual life that are distinct from the solutions and desires of his own life.

All love relations make use of the second person. Love is directed at the "you" of the close relative or the beloved "you" that has been selected among many different "you" for the amorous feeling, say. The beloved "you" does not cease to be a "you" in philic love and becomes "another Self" only if philia grows into storge. In this case, philic love ends, and "you" stops being a beloved "you." "Falling out of love" or the disappearance of amorous love is not inner catastrophe or death but the intended development of the soul's inner life.

"One's other Self" should not become "you" ("another Self"). This would be a serious malfunction of the person's entire inner world and a storgic catastrophe or despiritualization – a crime of sorts.

The pains of the rupture of philic love can heal. In contrast, a storgic catastrophe is not even a lethal wound but murder.

The perception of one storgic partner by the other storgic partner does not pertain to the first, second or third person. "One's other Self" is not the first person ("I") or "another Self". Neither is it

"you" (the person of the Encounter). Nor is it "we" (it is different from "we"). You cannot address the storgic beloved in either the second or the first or the third person.

"One's other Self" is a special grammatical category that is used for only person in the whole world – the storgic beloved.

Not all relations between people can be described by the three grammatical persons. For a son, the father is neither "he" nor "you" nor "I." The son experiences his father and addresses him in the fourth person.

One's storgic beloved – one's other Self – is neither "you" nor "I." He is addressed (and storgic love is experienced) in the fifth person.

A person sees his storgic beloved in the fifth person when he sees himself in him as his "other Self." The storgic beloved is experienced by his beloved in himself in the fifth person as "his other Self."

The inner worlds of the man and the woman fuse in storge. Storge is their fusion into a new and single whole that had not existed up until then. The relations of the storgic partners in this new unity take place in the fifth person.

Man is an encountering being that is capable of storge. He encounters, because he is capable of storge.

When a man says in the fifth person "my other Self," he refers to his other female Self, and vice-versa.

The male and female natures were introduced into earthly Nature with the goal of human storge, of "man and woman." The separation into man and woman is essential for storge and serves its needs. This is more correct than to say that storge exists, because there exist man and woman.

The inner worlds of a man and a woman function in a male or female way not for their own right but to work together and produce something in which male and female work combines and engenders new life and new work.

Man and woman were created especially for storge.

Man and woman are two different ways in which the human inner world works. The male and female inner worlds work both separately and together. There is no point of studying their differences and similarities. The question of the separate work of the male or female inner world is secondary. The main thing is their joint work, their unity. The differences and similarities of the two inner worlds exist for the sake of their joint work.

Storge is the implementation of the joint twofold work of the inner worlds of two persons – two as one.

Generally speaking, a person does not understand or badly understands another person. Storge is the only way of understanding clearly what is taking place in the inner world of another person. The special delight taken in perfect mutual understanding is an indicator of the existence of storge.

The principle of collective spiritual life is "don't do unto others what you don't want others to do unto you." The principle of storge is "do what you desire for both yourself and him (or her)."

The fusion of the inner worlds of man and woman is a mysterious process. It is impossible to reconstruct it in full. Storgic life is just as vast and diverse as the life of individual persons. Just as every human life, every storge is unusual and unique.

Storge is a special personalistic phenomenon. Storgic life is in dynamic equilibrium with the individual lives making it up. The results of storge differ from the results of an individual non-storgic life.

4.

The storgic life of man has particular merit in the Plan. Storgic love is the only type of spirituality that is directly accessible to everyone. In all the realm of personal and collective spiritual life, a person gets no higher or more powerful spiritual satisfaction than from the awareness that he is living and going through life together with someone. There is nothing that can be compared with this constant and perfect spiritual joy. The shared conjugal joys of family unity are so sweet and congenial to the soul that they serve as an imperfect image or "crumbs" of storgic paradise. The ideal image of storgic paradise lies within the depths of the male and female souls, leading them to marry.

The ascending life of the Encounter leads to storgic love and storgic spiritual life. The profound motif and goal of love in all its forms is to attain storge.

The storgic spiritual process gives mystic results. It produces a special fruit that is inaccessible to philic and even less to erotic love. Thus erotic and philic love should be considered as preliminary stages on the way to storgic love.

Storge is never attained by itself, compulsively or without effort. It can emerge only when both persons have made the necessary preparatory work. Generally speaking, one must attain storge through a penetrative preparatory pre-storgic stage.

Erotic love and philic love are at the front lines of storgic love. All the powerful work of the Encounter at the erotic and philic levels is done not for its own sake but for the emergence of storge.

The storgic role of sexual relations that result from the natural differences of the sexes is enormous and virtually indispensable. The possibility of attaining the unity of two people through the flesh depends, in turn, on the state of the body as an instrument of the soul. The sexually deprived person risks closing himself off storgically. The purer a person is sexually, the more responsive he usually is and the more easily pierced for prestorgic unity.

Erotic love and the sexual interpenetration of the flesh assist storgic love, which uses them to its own ends to meet the needs of storgic spiritual life. Sex ceases to serve the aims of this life if it is not used to its highest purpose. The piercing instrument of sex easily breaks down, becomes blunt and loses its storgic meaning. Storgic unity is too important, serious and fragile a matter to be put at risk.

To cite Leo Tolstoy's typically succinct definition, "happiness is the satisfaction of the being of man, who lives from birth to death only in this world. The good is the satisfaction of the demands of the eternal essence in man."

The good is not only distinct from happiness but is frequently acquired in unhappiness. Happiness is not a reality but a dream. In any case, it is a brief and exclusive state of the soul rather than its patrimony. In contrast, the good is eternal, indestructible and real.

The state of happiness and the state of good resemble each other in the sensation of the fullness of life that one gets in them. Happiness is mostly the desire of joy for oneself: for example, for people to serve me in soul and deed, to love me, and to give me the possibility of experiencing the satisfaction of loving and the joy of caring. The main point here is not egocentric intentions (the good is also "for oneself") but the indolent inner passiveness of the motif of happiness in contrast to the hardworking inner activity of the state of good.

Confusing the good (the hard-earned state of freedom of the soul) with happiness (a temporary state of elation of the soul, an awareness of the delight of life), a person mistakes the main indicator of the fulfillment of his purpose and mixes up the inner criteria of the proper life – what is "good" and what is "not good" (Gen. 2:18).

No Encounter other than the encounter between man and woman promises "one's own happiness." The hope of attaining "one's own happiness" is part of the paradigm of the Encounter between man and woman. This leads to the ineradicable and extra-empirical longing for mutual happiness, which is never attained.

The desire for storgic good that was put into us from above is no illusion. God sent people into the world to attain storgic good, while we expect and desire a remote and disfigured likeness of this good – the happiness of our psycho-physiological personality, a happiness that cannot last long by the laws of worldly life.

Storgic unity is not happiness but wellbeing. To attain storgic good, man must "take up his cross" and make an effort in life, i.e., suffer, fall, stand up and fall again, anguishing in his soul rather than being happy all the time. Storgic unity feeds on troubles, tribulations and sorrows, which are conditions for attaining the good.

Human souls are closed up and thus must fray their way towards one another in order to enter into storgic relations. Extolled from the beginning of mankind, lofty love-infatuation greatly augments the experience of happiness and powerfully frays the way, allowing souls to approach each other. The happiness of being in love serves (or, at least, should serve) the good of storgic unity.

Love is blind, as a rule; infatuation passes as soon as a person begins to see. In early youth, the desire for love runs ahead of the object of love. Storge is rare among young people. One must first enter into the storgic phase of life. Storge arises in maturity.

Life-infatuation – life as infatuation – is a special state of life. We define it as a kind of "pre-storgic state" of the inner world of man. People usually use the word "love" to refer to a pre-storgic regime of the functioning of their inner world. At all times, the theme of love in art has been the theme of the human experience of different pre-storgic storms and deceptions. No other state of human life has been described so vividly and diversely as this. Pre-storge has no value in itself, however. Man's inherent need to cultivate the pre-storgic state ultimately aims to attain a storgic state of life.

The fire of philic love is needed, as a rule, to kindle storgic love. The pre-storgic state of life is a shoot out of which the storgic tree should grow. However, "should grow" does not necessarily mean "will grow." Pre-storge does not necessarily lead to storge. One can spend one's entire life going from the delight of one philic love to another yet be a complete failure from the standpoint of storge.

People usually consider sublime feelings to be poetically inspiring feelings and passions. In reality, sublime feelings are feelings that do not blow their own horn. They are quiet feelings – not towards a mistress but towards a wife with whom one has lived for decades.

The prelude to storge – the philic pre-storge of storgic love – is a highly seductive state. Many people are willing to spend their entire lives in pre-storgic arousal without thinking about the state that follows. Pre-storge can last for years yet not "forever," contrary to what some people desire. It inevitably comes to an end. It either disappears or transforms into storge. However, it never replaces the latter but only announces it, invokes it and prepares for it.

In pre-storgic excitement, a poet sings the song of life and love with all his soul and all its power. He imagines that the magical sounds of this song invite him to the joy of the feast of life. Of course, they entice him – yet not to a feast but to the hard labor of storge. The storgic call should resound (and be heard!) in pre-storge. The happiness of pre-storge should precede the good of storge and serve to

implement it. Otherwise the sound of pre-storge is not the triumphant cry of the breach of fortress walls separating souls but the noise of a burst bubble or of a shot into nowhere.

People say that you cannot understand "love." This is indeed the case with respect to pre-storgic love, because pre-storge is an intermediary state – something that is transitional and still unformed, something that has announced yet not implemented itself, something that is only a promise and often a false promise. Far from always striving for storge, pre-storge tries to implement it only when it is not wrapped up in itself and when it is consciously oriented on evolving into the former.

As pre-storge, philic love has a lawful place in human life. However, people have created a cult of philic love, turning it into a goal and value in itself, degrading it and making it incapable of turning into storge.

The non-orientation (or, more precisely, the non-obligatory orientation) of philic love on storge is one of the misconceptions of human existence. This misconception is cultivated by art, which creates models for emulation and for reproduction through emulation.

Pre-storgic behavior differs from storgic behavior properly speaking insofar as storge strives for unity, while pre-storge is interested in mutuality or in the influence of the other on oneself or of oneself on the other. The pre-storge of infatuation is possible with many people that one encounters on the path of life, while storge is, generally speaking, possible with only a single person.

5.

The male animal is attracted by the smell of the female. A man is attracted by the image of the woman. Philically, he is attracted by the female philic (or, more precisely, philic and erotic) image. Storgically, he is bound by the woman's storgic image, to which he presents his male storgic image.

The philic and erotic image is not the same thing as the image of one's other Self. They announce themselves differently and are selective in different ways.

The storgic image is not an image of a person that can be captured by a photographer. In the mutually reciprocal storgic movement, minor details are important, even if no one else sees them: seemingly secondary movements, expressions, and glimmers that storgically attract the partner's attention. They contain an aroma of the sensation and consciousness of life of the storgic partner.

Although the storgic image shines through the visible hull, it is not perceived by the eyes but is made out in the outward appearance by the heart's intuitive vision. The insight into storge is the insight into outward appearance. This is a mystery rather than a whim of male or female fantasy.

The heart's storgic aesthetics often do not coincide with psychological, physiological and aesthetic perception. A woman may not be to a man's taste yet nonetheless irresistibly attract his heart by her storgic beauty, which seems to be created especially for him. Everyone has his or her own aesthetics of the storgic image that can neither be transferred nor inculcated. Nor do they disappear over time.

The storgic momentum is sexually disinterested and is often extinguished by sexual self-interest. The beauty of the female image is important for pre-storgic games that do not necessarily lead to storge. A man's storgic woman does not need to arouse him philically and erotically. In storge, he looks not for beauty but for somebody of his own, his own special female image or some of its special expressions and traits that suggest that this image has something important and desirable for storge.

Usually, a man perceives his storgic image of a woman as a womb in which it is good to live, which his soul desires, and into which he must make his way so as to feel at home there. Nevertheless,

he does not set himself the goal of partaking in the woman's inner world. He looks for his female image that, from the start, contains (and shows) something that can attract his storgic will and seeks the latter's "storgic place" that is expecting him and only him. The male storgic will is always the will to occupy the woman's storgic place. Nevertheless, it is the woman that strives to raise the Encounter to the storgic level. This profound female desire is irrational.

The important thing for the storgic partner is not that he lives in the other partner but that the other lives in him. I experience the image that penetrates into me "as myself," I sense it as my own, I cannot help but open myself to it, and I love and pity it "as my own self."

One pities the storgic beloved as one pities one's own self. I cannot live without him or her in me. Storge is not for my own self and not for me to feel good but for something different.

I have received a storgic image that is intended for the encounter with my storgic beloved, and his or her storgic image is also within me. My storgic beloved carries in him or her both the image of the person that can become his or her storgic beloved and his or her own storgic image. All of these images must be in harmony between themselves and make up a single whole.

One's own storgic image actively expects the encounter with the storgic beloved and emanates a launching signal in all directions, summoning him or her to approach. A person carries the image of his other Self in him or herself as a mother bears a child. This image strives to be realized and leads to storgic presentiment, storgic desire and storgic pressure. It cannot be described but can only be divined with the help of storgic intuition during the encounter.

I know not figuratively but for sure that "my other half" lives on Earth at the same time as I. I seek to meet her yet do not know where to go and do not know what she is like before I see her. In my life, I am urged to go somewhere and find someone I do not know. All the same, I go and sometimes even find her!

A person seeks the storgic encounter with all his heart and keeps expecting it at any moment. To wait and search with such intense presentiment and constant expectation and delay is quite a torment. How can one avoid making a mistake in a state of such excruciating longing? It is a miracle that the storgic encounter takes place at all. Indeed, the miracle is not that the encounter takes place but that the storgic intuition functions correctly in the endless series of encounters that constantly promise and beckon. Moreover, it functions independently of me: someone whispers to me, "Here she is!" It is also astonishing that storgic recognition can take place not at first sight and not during the first encounter and not even during the first year of acquaintanceship. You may not hear anything for a long time and then suddenly perceive a voice within yourself, realize the storgic value of the encounter, and recognize that it is storgic. This voice comes both from within and from without.

Someone carefully saw it to it that our encounter took place and that we recognized each other. Who is it? Neither I nor the other person, but someone else.

The image of the storgic beloved in me and my storgic image in him or her should correspond, be two halves of a single whole image and derive from the latter. It is this whole unworldly storgic image that directs the search for the storgic encounter and guides its choice. It was implanted in us from the start and thus belongs to someone who existed before us and who placed the storgic images inside us.

Although it would be incorrect to say that you can become friends with anyone, friendship is not selective. In contrast, storge is extremely selective. A friend is someone to whom you are true rather than someone whom you love and with whom you are one. A friend is in no way "your other Self."

You can put your life down for a friend. At the same time, you cannot help but put all of your being down for your storgic beloved.

A friend does not have to be constantly present. In contrast, the absence of the storgic beloved is always a torment similar to that experienced by an orphan. It is unnatural.

Friendship is the most sublime manifestation of human existence as such. Storge is a manifestation of both human and mystic life.

Friendship is something that is given and grows stronger over the years. Storge starts from the lowest stages and ascends upwards, going from the appearance of storge in human life to divine storge at the height of the realization of the Divine Plan.

Friendship is an Encounter in this life only. Storge is an Encounter both in this life and in post-human life.

Friendship is the supreme manifestation of the inner life of the Encounter. Storge is the spiritual life of the Encounter – storgic spiritual life.

Storge is a special class of phenomena of spiritual life, some of whose qualities are new and inaccessible to the spiritual life of the individual. The result of storge is qualitatively different.

The more a married couple lives together, the closer it becomes and the more used to each other. However, this is not storgic growth but the consolidation of conjugal kinship ties. The augmentation of conjugal closeness just as the strengthening of friendship is a form of inner growth.

Storge is not given at once. Storge always emerges in the process of growing – storgic spiritual growth.

Storgic growth is a great mystery not only of man's inner life but also of his spiritual life. It is deeply connected with the process of man's spiritual ascent. Storgic growth is just as important in storgic spiritual life as spiritual growth. Storgic growth and spiritual growth are the fundamental motives and driving forces of all human life. Any moment that passes without the growth of one or the other is lifeless for a soul.

Storgic growth is the growth not of mutuality but of the mutual penetration, mutual involvement and mutual absorption of one inner world by the other until they constitute in all areas a single life with two perspectives.

Storgic growth requires spending spiritual energy on each other and receiving it from each other. Storgic growth is mutually produced in joint twofold spiritual work and in hidden joint spirituality that the man's and woman's souls create, consolidate and put into action.

The immobility or cessation of storgic growth is fraught with the same consequences in storgic spiritual life as the cessation of growth in any other kind of spiritual life. The acceleration of storgic growth revives a person's soul just as the acceleration of spiritual growth. In both cases, the descent begins not after a breakdown or catastrophe but after the deceleration of growth that leads to stagnation. A storgically motionless couple is not necessarily devoid of storgic good but lacks the good of storgic growth.

What is true for spiritual growth is equally true for storgic growth. The storgic good increases only during storgic growth. If there is no storgic growth, the storgic good does not exist and cannot be

preserved. If it stays on one level, it becomes depleted and decreases. To receive and preserve storgic good, one must not just preserve the existing level of storge but consolidate and augment it (storgic growth). This naturally calls for passing from one stage of storgic ascent to the next.

A simple and unmistakable indicator of emerging storge is its increase over time. No matter how bright the honeymoon was, the feeling of love – storgic love – should be fuller, deeper and even keener 30 years later.

The descent begins not when storgic proximity disappears but when it stops growing. Alienation, opposition, infidelity of all kinds, self-interest, and the souls' avoidance of each other, foreboding the collapse of the storgic relationship, begin when the process of storgic growth stops.

Numerous and often difficult obstacles inevitably and necessarily occur on the path of all spiritual growth. In the same way, many difficulties, contortions and dramas of mutual life are needed to produce storge and storgic spiritual growth. A person must obtain the storgic good himself. It is not enough to enter into a storgic relationship. One must manage to preserve it in real-life conditions that constantly put it to the test. Life tests the storgic relationship just as any other spiritual ascent. Tribulations of all kinds as well as family members, relatives and other people keep trying to destroy the storgic good.

The storgic image points to the fifth person, "one's other Self," and offers it for storge, often without realizing what troubles and difficulties are involved in attaining the storgic goal. Some aspects of the inner world may be unsuitable for storgic goals and even oppose them. Overcoming obstacles to storgic growth such as differences in cultural tastes, psychological incompatibility and corporal rejection are sometimes part of the effort of storge and sometimes superfluous to it.

What opposes storge can serve to steel and strengthen it. Overcoming the inevitable trials and obstacles accelerates storgic growth. This includes above all the trial of taking up the cross of one's other Self (his or her everyday cross or the cross that unexpectedly became his or her lot), which cannot be avoided and that always exists in storgic life. Another is the storgic trial by faith, when one is summoned to believe the other even when there are no visible reasons to trust him or her and when no one else does.

The eternal dream of husband and wife is to die together, suddenly and at the same moment. This is not granted to man. The main storgic trial in store for a person is to serve the beloved in his or her terminal illness and part with him or her when death puts an end to their intertwinement. Dying first, one partner puts his cross of death on the other.

Much of what was not finished in storgic life is completed in the final period of mutual life on earth. He who remains alive takes upon himself the burden of the terminal agony of whom he cannot live without. This suffering is capable of changing the posthumous fate of the storgic beloved.

6.

A man and a woman in storgic intertwinement lead their own special lives. A man cannot fully understand a woman's life, and vice-versa. She is not "me," and "I" am not her. We do not always have the same life states and moods or the same thoughts and feelings. In storgic co-life, each engages in his or her own activities, loves or does not love in his or her own way, and feels with different intensity and

even differently than the storgic beloved. Simply on account of our human individuality, we are never what our other Self literally understands us to be.

A person that I could call "my other Self" should not exist at all in principle. The very possibility of perceiving in the fifth person and recognizing another person (especially of the opposite sex) to be one's own Self is an inexplicable mystery. Although the existence of a storgic relation may be evident, it is impossible to study the joint life of storgic partners from without in order to find the inner grounds of their storge. For the outside observer, storge is a false experience and condition. Nevertheless, no state of life is more authentic or more sought by man as such.

By ourselves, we could not live in a state of storge where each person experiences the other through himself and himself through the other. Storge can take place with the help of a certain powerful force that comes from within, as if from in between two storgic partners, yet does not belong to them.

The acceleration of spiritual growth is the main condition for the sustainability of all spiritual growth. My other Self is my thoughts, feelings and desires in my storgic beloved. All of them are the object of unbounded storgic spiritual growth. At first sight, this may seem impossible in view of the excessive cluttering of the inner world with all kinds of foreign (anti or non-storgic) vital desires.

If storgic growth was simply the result of the efforts of storgic partners, it could not accelerate or be sustainable or durable. This clearly shows that the storgic partners are not the only participants in storgic spiritual growth. Generally speaking, sustainable storgic spiritual growth is produced not so much by storgic partners as by someone through them.

The direct relationship between two people is temporal and destroyed by death. However, when one of the storgic partners dies before the other, the storgic relationship continues. The partner that is still alive feels the presence of the defunct in his or her life yet also knows – knows for real – that they are and will continue to be together just as before. This is not a conjecture, a self-delusion, a mirage or a dream but a bright feeling that suffuses the remaining years of the life of the partner that was destined to leave this world last.

There is no doubt about the authenticity of such mutual communication. The storgic partners did not and do not part not because they are tied into a magic knot but because somebody else keeps them together – one partner in this world and the other in the other world. This "somebody" must therefore live both here and there.

Each storgic partner leads his or her own personal life. In addition, they lead a third mutual life, in which the different aspects of their inner worlds only participate. Not two but three personalities take part in storge. The third personality is not a being of relation or transformation but a mystic being that subordinates the personalities of the storgic partners and implements the storgic relation through himself.

Between storgic partners (in contrast to other encounters and other human mutual inner states) there exists a supplementary force of mutual attraction that originates not in one or the other storgic partner but in a third source.

The subject of human storgic spiritual life is the person himself and his storgic being – his cherub.

Many people live with the more or less intense sensation that someone out there is destined to unite with them into a new storgic whole. Choosing a single human being as his storgic partner and denying proximity to others, a person selects with whom he will be united from now on and in life in

general – in present and future life, in worldly and otherworldly life. Human life consists precisely of this choice and selection. The perspicacity of this choice is the fundamental problem of a person's storgic life.

According to the innate feeling of storge, the person with whom I am destined to be united in future life exists somewhere in the world. This is not a presentiment but a type of knowledge. I know not only about his or her existence but also about my unity with him or her in storge.

The idea of storge is that, in the interaction of two, there appears a third that connects the first and the second. My other Self is a person that belongs to the same storgic trinomial as myself – to the new spiritual being that we engender together. Nothing like that exists in physiological sexual life or the psychic life of the Self.

We are simply outlining here the new concepts that we are introducing to give a preliminary idea of them. To clarify their essence, it is necessary to describe many new conceptual layers. An attempt to understand the nature of the storgic being is made in the second volume of *The Emergence and Transfiguration of Man*.

The storgic being has a key meaning and purpose and permeates the entire implementation of the Plan from the initial self-induced storge of man to Divine storge at the final stage of the Plan.

The pathos of storge lies neither in one person serving another nor in two persons fusing but in two persons fusing with a third and jointly serving a third that transcends both of them. To expect my storgic beloved to give his or her life up for me means expecting that he or she will give it up not only for me alone but also for our storgic being.

The storgic partner senses the presence of the force of the storgic being as a force that does not depend on the intensity (or weakness) of his feelings that launched the storge. The power of the storgic being does not belong to the storgic partner. It cannot be replaced or abolished by him and only augments over the years, becoming invincible.

Storge is the involvement of the third participant of storge, the storgic being, in the joint inner life of a man and a woman. The higher the level of storge, the more the storgic relation is based on free will. This allows the higher subjects of storgic spiritual life to become involved in the storgic spiritual process together with human souls (the lower human subjects of storgic spiritual life).

Storge calls for mutual complementarity and mutual augmentation in the joint life à trois together with the third member – one's storgic being.

"Encountering man" encounters insofar as he produces in the course of his life something that is not initially included in it and that appears in the process of life. The main fruit of the Encounter is the newly engendered storgic being. It does not appear in one's life at birth but is created (or summoned) in the process of life and is not removed or destroyed after death.

In itself, the spiritual intertwinement of a man and a woman is temporary and dissolves in the course of life or after death. Moreover, a man and a woman cannot unite in each other or in one of them (either the man or the woman) – this would result in a man encompassing a woman or a woman encompassing a man. For durable and eternal unity, a man and a woman need an indestructible and non-mortal mutual vessel – a third being that would incorporate both of them. The storgic being encompasses and unites the man and the woman. The indestructible spiritual intertwinement of man and woman takes place in the storgic being. In *The Emergence and Transfiguration of Man*, we will describe where this being comes from in storgic intertwinement.

Properly speaking, the storgic being does not leave the field of non-mortal life in which it exists. The two partners that bring themselves into the storgic being attain personal non-mortality in it.

The storgic being is not the fruit of the romantic imagination. The eternal human sensation of one's other half is the presentiment of the storgic being within oneself. Storge is the participation in intertwinement of two beings directed at each other with a third (storgic) being that appears in human life in addition to parental higher souls.

The spiritual status of the storgic being is higher than the status of the souls that summoned it towards themselves. In storge each person acquires a higher fullness of being insofar as he becomes part of the essentially more complete life of the storgic being.

Storge is marked not only by the striving towards one another but also by the joint striving towards a third being. This striving best and most fully expresses the nature of storge. "One's other Self" is not a double, replica or copy of oneself. It is given through the third subject of storge that is tied to "one's other Self." Storge is a particular kind of closeness that both the man and the woman need, because the storgic being needs it and inscribes itself into it.

Even if two people are very close and similar and have very harmonious and joyous relations, the storgic being shall not necessarily enter their joint life. At a given moment, all three must come into such contact with each other and unite in such a special and ineffable way that they generate a threefold resonance. Storge cannot be realized without the storgic being, even if both partners deeply strive for it. Storge without the storgic being is a spark that cannot kindle and set on fire.

The human soul naturally desires to attain what it receives at the summit of life. The soul strives for the summit and only for the summit. The striving for storge is the striving for the non-mortal storgic being and for its evocation, elicitation and attraction to oneself. The dream of one's own storge manifests the ideal striving of the higher soul for the storgic being.

Two beings, a man and a woman, insert themselves into a third (storgic) being that is homogeneous to them. The storgic being is not just the connecting link between the two or just their sum but both their connecting link and their sum as well as their highest point that, elevating them, brings them together from two sides into a third being where "one's own Self" and "one's other Self" are included in a threefold unity in which something of the inner world of the man and the inner world of the woman are combined in an unfused yet indivisible manner.

The storgic love of the man and the woman strives for the storgic being. Storgic love leads to the storgic being, evokes it and suffuses it. Love is selective, as it tries to guess with whom it should evoke the storgic being, unite with it, and enter into it.

The storgic striving is not the striving towards being integrated with one another but the striving for a common sensation and awareness of life and for having a whole life in common. In order to be together always – to be together in a meta-human sense – one must be together "à trois" together with the storgic being, to be in it and to be it.

Storgic spiritual life is a Love life in which the storgic being participates.

The results of the entire storgic process are concentrated in the storgic being. Storgic partners work not so much for their own sake as for their storgic being and for its development, enriching both themselves and it. Storge is necessary for developing the storgic being. The storgic being is the main subject of the storgic process and its main beneficiary.

The storgic being is the vehicle of the value experience of the love of one person for another. It incorporates the most holy and sacred aspects of love that cannot be scorned, that must be present constantly and at each moment, and that must confirm their presence with the feeling of storgic love.

Successful storge is evidenced by a sense of constant elation from the presence of "my other Self" in me and in my life, next to and together with "my own Self." The elation of taking one's other Self into oneself and serving it like my own Self announces and attests the arrival of the storgic being.

The presence of the storgic being in one's life and even the presentiment of this presence brings elation into one's inner world. When the storgic being enters, it overwhelms man's entire being. Man welcomes the storgic being with rapture. It makes a person's whole life more intense, including the life of his or her body. The storgic being revives and augments the fullness and quality of a person's life, including his wellbeing and happiness.

The inclusion of the storgic being in the union of man and woman serves to bless this union and give it a sacral status.

Gender duality in the world of man exists in the form of the storgic being and storgic love.

The secret of gender lies in love. The unity of sexes in earthly nature serves the goal of reproduction and the continuation of the species. The unity of sexes in storge serves to reunite and to connect the disparate into a single whole (going as far as fusion). The storgic process is opposite to reproduction.

The man, the woman and the child they beget are together temporarily and in the physiological sense. The man, the woman and the storgic being are together always and in the storgic spiritual sense. The storgic being is an offspring that is born from the man and the woman, taking something from them. Storge and the storgic being require not any pair of people but precisely a man and a woman, who are solely capable of begetting offspring together and nurturing them. The storgic being reacts to the love of a man and a woman and draws life from it rather than from its surrogate or from friendship. Storgic love is necessary for the life of the storgic being.

Male and female natures cannot fuse in human existence per se. They fuse only in a being with superhuman existence – the storgic being.

7.

Storgic partners live like two cherries that hang together and whose cores are connected by the stem of the storgic being. Each stem is connected through the tree branch with other stems on which pairs of cherries hang. This is a topic in its own right that we discuss in detail in *The Emergence and Transfiguration of Man*.

Storgic partners see the storgic being in each other's eyes – and love one another. When they stop seeing it, their love ceases.

A person waits for the storgic being to enter him. As soon as it appears, it becomes essential to him. So essential that he cannot live without it.

The storgic being does not belong to the individual or to two storgic partners. They only hold it by its opposite sides. And they do not always manage to hang onto it.

The storgic being itself strives to be bound between two people, and they have to keep it in place from two sides. This is the main task of people in storgic love. When the binding force of the storgic being weakens (which inevitably occurs from time to time) and its alienation is not perceived by

the partners as a distress signal, it begins to distance itself further to the point of rupture that is then effectuated by the partners themselves.

One never knows when the storgic being will leave its place. It sometimes suffices that one of the two partners let his or her end go. When the storgic being abandons a couple, it leaves behind not a vacant but an empty (used up) place that is no longer capable of housing another storgic being. The drama of storgic love is the drama of the storgic being in man.

We do not know why the storgic being decides to come to us or to abandon us. People in general and, all the more, a concrete person never know how the storgic being participates in the spheres for whose sake it enters a soul. This does not mean that the question of why and how a storgic being comes out of its abode and enters a concrete person is always a mystery.

Man's inner world makes the situation of the Encounter of man and woman insurmountably attractive for the storgic being and brings the storgic being into action.

The storgic being is poorly protected in people. Its willpower is insufficient for reinforcing the durability of storge and maintaining man and woman in the storgic process. Man's free will may contradict the will of the storgic being and overcome it.

Infatuation often violates storge and intrudes into it. Infatuation and storge belong to different life currents. One flows independently of the other like movement on opposite river banks.

The storgic being renders itself to the man and woman of its choice. It is on the front lines and passionately strives to leap into combat without paying much attention to its rear flank.

By the will of the storgic being, one higher soul unites with another higher soul.

People can never be strangers to one another in the storgic being. They either participate in the Encounter and the storgic spiritual process or not. Some people have not met for storge, while others have met for storge and are ready to undertake the joint labor of storge.

Interaction and especially storgically effective interaction through the storgic being can arise even when there is no particular closeness in the desires of the Selves or mutual physical satisfaction or anything else that could assist storge at different levels of the inner world. All of this may be irrelevant in comparison to the storgic attraction that emanates from the storgic being. Nothing – no mismatches or oppositions – can obstruct the realization of storge if the storgic being wants it.

The inner world of man provides for the fundamental possibility of the appearance of storge thanks of the efforts of the storgic being. The storgic being exerts its storgic will, and the matter is settled. In principle, the striving for unity through the storgic being should be rewarded by storge. Most often, storge appears as a reward for the work of the storgic will *per se*. Storge is both the reward and the pure outcome of the storgic wills of both partners.

The storgic being realizes the state of the intertwinement of souls. This intertwinement is necessary not for its own sake but for something else.

The storgic spiritual process that proceeds at the will of the storgic being resembles the process of a potter making a vessel on his wheel. Two hands (the storgic wills of the man and the woman) manufacture the vessel together. Then it is filled with what it was intended to contain.

The storgic Self acts in the Structures of both man and woman. However, female storge is not age dependent, while male storge greatly weakens by the age of 40 and usually disappears altogether by the age of 50. Apparently the storgic being resists the male storgic will. At the same time, a man may retain his striving for storge to the end of his life.

8.

According to the Russian expression, a couple in perfect harmony "lives soul in soul." How exact and true!

The storgic Encounter takes place to integrate the other into one's inner world, and oneself into his or hers. A serious collective effort would be needed to develop the doctrine of storge. One can try to make a typology of storge, yet it will always be provisional. A single storgic process contains several phenomena and currents that are both dependent on one another and independent to a certain degree. Each of them produces its own results.

Storgic experiences are key experiences of the inner world of man. Man's entire being participates in storgic interaction.

There is something in a woman's body that cannot live without a man's body and vice-versa. This is not so much sexual craving as a special facet of the flesh that is designed for the emergence of what the Bible calls "one flesh" – the husband-and-wife.

"The two shall become one flesh." The sexual dependence of the sexes harbors a mystery that is connected to the intertwinement of flesh with flesh and of the bodily life of one with the bodily life of the other. This leads to the emergence of co-flesh, in which the nature of the being of the other sex is experienced not as "mine" but as "my own." "My" body is another (or foreign) body that is in my possession. "My own" body belongs to me (and I to it) just as my proper body. The important thing here is the (possibly) fleeting yet mutual and simultaneous experience by the woman of the male flesh as her own and by the man of the female flesh as his own. The "storge of the body" awaits the man and the woman when, in expectation of it (rather than for animal pleasure or its anticipation), they strive to experience each others' bodies as their own. The "one flesh" arises in eros to the accompaniment of the joint melody of philia when it is not for the sake of eros or philia but for storge. The "one flesh" – one for two – spontaneously arises in the storgic process and even conditions this process in a special type of storge called self-induced storge.

Storge lies at the root of the Plan for man and thus must be attainable, if not effortlessly or automatically, then at least by itself and in a natural fashion on the condition, first of all, that it is launched; secondly, that it is not disrupted; and, thirdly, that it is at all possible in a given couple.

Self-induced storge is the most natural and widespread type of storgic intertwinement that has been most often implemented by people across the ages.

The "one flesh," the common destiny and the approaching movement of a man and a woman create such an intertwinement both above and below that the storgic being appears by itself on account of the state of things and of mutual readiness, because two people have lived together for a long period of time and amassed a lot in themselves together and now have many things in common. Decades or (more rarely) years pass for this to occur.

In self-induced storge, storgic forces are primarily spent on bringing the Selves towards each other. However, self-induced storge is not produced by the storgic being, which does not exist yet. The

sensation of the storgic partner ("one's other Self") in self-induced storge is not the sensation of the life of the storgic being but the sensation of "one's Self" in the other.

Self-induced storge is accompanied by emotions whose fullness and intensity approach the loftiest emotions of friendship, which is also based on the approach of "Selves" through souls.

In self-induced storge, the storgic being comes into play only at the end of the storgic process. The development of self-induced storge is a movement towards the formation of the storgic being.

In self-induced storge, the interaction between man and woman spontaneously leads to the boundary beyond which the process of full-fledged (threefold) storge begins.

The storgic being does not participate in the process of self-induced storge. When the storgic being begins to act, self-induced storge gives way to the process that follows it.

The storgic being is born in self-induced storge. The storgic being created in self-induced storge is non-mortal and lives its own superhuman life yet does not hide from man and is constantly ready to enter into him to realize new storge in human life.

The realization of storge in its basic form is important in its own right. For this reason, chance and even incidental factors that have no subsequent importance give the process of love a spontaneous rather than a planned nature. This is apparently grounded in the foundations of the amorous feeling itself.

Human life strives for storge and remains in a state of its constant expectation. This expectation is implemented either in storge or in a special state of storgicity.

We should distinguish between storge and storgicity (storgic interrelations).

Many people meet year after year in the company of their youth. These relations sometimes lead to friendship and sometimes not. People look for the mutual affection of the Encounter, and they get together in order to enter a special state of storgicity towards one another.

The entry of the storgic being into the initial storgic disposition of self-induced storge is one of the principal mysteries of human life. The fetus develops out of the storgic embryo in this disposition (cf. *The Emergence and Transfiguration of Man*, Part 23). This does not always happen – not even in every long-term marriage.

Self-induced storge does not appear instantaneously. One first needs to enter a state of storgicity in the Encounter and then work on the storgic being. The appearance of self-induced storge is preceded by a long period of conjugal storgicity that antedates the participation of the storgic being.

The close relations of two people of different genders are marked by a special intimacy of interpenetration. Two people, who may not have even needed each other psychologically at first, met and embarked on a journey together. Storgic relations arise on their own from the mutual journey through life and the mutual struggle, suffering, joy, and forbearance towards one another.

The process of storgic relations can also be launched without pre-storge.

A husband and wife that have lived together for years begin to resemble each other not only in manners but also in facial traits – even if self-induced storge does not occur. They are together. They are joined through their bodies and intertwined through smell, warmth, sounds and visual perception. It suffices to know the warmth of her body, the feeling of her skin, the smell of her perfume and the sound of her breathing to intertwine with her into a single whole in which not just bodies but also souls come together. The constant presence of one person in the life of another creates the situation of storgic contact.

Far from all married couples that attain conjugal storgicity ultimately gain a storgic being and enter into storge properly speaking. Most of them remain in a state of preliminary storgicity – a sort of preparatory storge. The lowest storgic good – the good of the contact of higher souls – can generally be attained without particular effort and is theoretically accessible to all. A good half of mankind is unable to rise beyond this self-induced stage of storgic development. A great many married couples become storgically beloved relatives. Their kin love differs from other types of self-love insofar as it links up with storgic love.

In contrast to storge, the state of preliminary storgicity can be attained at any age – 40, 60 or even later.

Storgicity as such is a key human quality with regard to the implementation of the Plan.

Love your neighbor as yourself, i.e., as your other Self, is the precise formula of storgic love. Yet the most important question here is what one means by one's "neighbor." In sentimental 19th-century Christianity, the "neighbor" in this commandment was understood as man in general. In the 20th century, the neighbor was taken to refer particularly to a "foreign" person – e.g., a person belonging to a certain "minority." Medieval people understood the neighbor as a person belonging to their confession. The neighbor in the Torah was a member of one's own people – a neighbor in the collective inner sense. The Torah called upon you to love every member of your own people as if he or she were your storgic partner or your other Self.

Love your neighbor as yourself is a storgic principle that sets down the highest degree of the collective spiritual unity of a people.

In personal storgic spiritual life (the co-life of one's Self and one's other Self), the storgic partner or neighbor is created through difficult and complex psychological work. When people co-feel, co-think and co-act in collective spiritual national life, the neighbor is set down and defined by the storgic unity of the people.

"Love your neighbor as yourself" is the ideal form of the storgic interrelations of a nation. However, the demands of storgic collective spiritual love are not impossible ideal demands. Strong storgic national love is essential for the full-fledged life of the nation.

The love for your neighbor as yourself is a storgic national feeling.

Each national soul is marked by a distinct psycho-physiological affinity of countrymen. Each national soul has its own cultural affinity. Each national soul has a special (Russian, German, French, etc.) kind of storgicity. It preserves through the centuries its own way of experiencing the joy and pain of one's neighbor, its own image of affectionateness, decency, friendliness, psychological responsibility and compassion – and, of course, its own particular style of selflessness in all its forms from simple politeness and courtesy in everyday communication to the loftiest manifestations of self-sacrifice.

National storgicity is strengthened by a common view of life, a common faith, traditional ethical standards for social life and collective spiritual power.

The storgic proximity of a nation does not stem from the common life and ethnic solidarity of souls and their cohabitation and coexistence. In storgic proximity, the irrational sensation of one's people as the collective inner neighbor arises and functions. This sensation calls for self-sacrifice out of the feeling of inner responsibility for this neighbor.

The feeling of the storgic neighbor includes the feeling of fairness and is experienced by the storgic conscience, which calls for mutual inner responsibility and self-sacrifice.

Every person harbors an image of his or her national storgic neighbor—of the "real Russian" if you are Russian or of the "real Georgian" if you are Georgian. This is not the image of another person but an image of your own self in the life of your people. This image is idealistic by nature: it contains everything that every person in the nation loves, storgically desires and expects.

The demands of storgic collective spiritual love are not impossible idealistic demands. Full-fledged national life requires strong storgic collective national love.

The storgicity of the national soul is not genetic. It exists insofar as the national soul exists and only when it exists. The nation turns into a mass not on account of the baseness of interests or the deafness to its ideological leaders but as a result of the disappearance of its storgicity.

The Russian nation, at least in the state that Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky found it, is particularly attractive thanks to its radiant storgicity that it apparently does not notice, flaunt or value in itself. Nevertheless, it comes (or used to come?) to the fore in everything.

The storgicity of Russian commoners is extremely touching, organic and full-fledged. It is the country's main asset. Russian people find it hard to live without storgic life, without experiencing the feeling of one's neighbors. They get drunk at times to overcome their inhibitions and experience storgic proximity. They are wary of people who do not drink and do not want to get a feeling of storgic proximity by weakening their selfhood through alcoholic relaxation. There are many different kinds of drunks in Russia, including charming drunks that you do not find in any other nation.

The attitude towards criminals and the compassion towards them as fallen, outcast and persecuted neighbors, just as the attitude towards beggars, cripples and wretched people, is clearly influenced by the storgic conscience of the Russian people. The same is true of communal "social leveling trends" in the Russian nation that derive from its understanding of fairness and are therefore storgically unabolishable. One must keep this in mind. In his time, Stolypin was right when he tried to destroy peasant communes for the sake of the economic and political development of the country, yet Leo Tolstoy was also right to criticize him for destroying the collective inner health of the nation.

One should distinguish between forced storgic growth and free storgic spiritual growth. Free storgic growth requires the willing participation of the cherub.

Forced storgic growth takes place at all stages of storge (except the highest). Yet only self-induced storge is founded upon it. Thus anyone can engage in the labor of self-induced storge in any healthy inner state of life.

Forced storgic growth in self-induced storge aims to give a greater fullness of life to a man and a woman that have entered the initial intertwinement of their inner worlds. In comparison to free growth, it has a short range. Anyone participating in the forced storgic growth of self-induced storge strives to attain the highest possible state that has been set for him. The work of forced growth in self-induced storge is confined to one's inner world and one's Self.

In contrast, storgic work in free growth focuses not so much on one's own inner world as on the inner world of one's storgic partner. This takes the form of service, nurturing, self-sacrifice and, of course, storgic love itself, in which two people freely and joyously intertwine with one another.

In its pure form, free storgic growth is possible thanks to the interaction through the storgic being. In such interaction, the partners learn free storgic growth and bring about an acceleration of storgic growth *per se* that is necessary for the greatest activation of the will of the storgic being.

As a rule, free storgic growth eventually slows down. A good means of preserving storge and augmenting the storgic good is to participate in collective national life, which assures and actively promotes the acceleration of storgic growth. Self-induced storge becomes extremely problematic without collective national storgicity. The fruits of self-induced storge grow out of the collective inner storge of a nation.

9.

Souls must approach each other for storge. When the inner world of one person is tightly closed from the inner world of another by the separating boundaries of each individual, souls usually approach each other through the penetrative force of infatuation. *Philia* desires storge and wants to elevate infatuation to storgic heights. Infatuation shows the storgic striving of the soul the way to another heart, pointing to an image and proposing it. It is extremely difficult for storge to materialize without philic emotions.

Pre-storgic infatuation is necessary for penetrating another soul and creating room for storge – creating a channel that would link the higher souls of a man and a woman. The storgic place in the female soul cannot remain empty and insistently demands fulfillment. It is so difficult to withstand such pressure that a woman sometimes offers this place to the first comer – to anyone who will take it.

Storge is the unification of higher souls. It is difficult for a soul to find by itself the other soul with which it should and must be storgically together. Striving for storgic intertwinement, people often become disappointed in each other on account of the blindness of their souls.

Different types of storge surrogates appear, because storge is set in motion in a preliminary fashion or on account of impatience yet without sufficient grounds for the soul. An encounter sends the signal for storge and sets in motion what can be set in motion at the given (and possibly very ill-suited) moment.

Storge may fail, because the process goes awry: one did not live together for long enough or destructive philic forces intervened or life separated the two persons or they made a mistake *en route* or something was lacking or an accident took place or there was a fatal misunderstanding and so on and so forth.

However, storge may also fail, because the higher souls are unable to be in storge with their storgic being. The storgic partner may become "foreign" immediately or years after, not being intended for me or for anyone else for that matter. Storge always "turns out" to be something and may turn out to be "foreign storge."

Foreign storge arises first and foremost when a man and a woman have undertaken storge in vain. Although both of them may well be capable of full-fledged storgic proximity and may go to great efforts, nothing comes of it, because they are not suited for each other and have mistaken their partner for someone that he or she is not. All the conditions for implementing full-fledged storge may well be

present, yet it remains unattainable on account of hidden alienation or incompatibility. She may well not be meant to become his storgic partner – and vice-versa. And there is nothing you can do about it.

One may say that another Self acts in storge – your other Self. Or that your own Self acts – only another "your Self." In foreign storge, it is your own Self and "your foreign Self" that act. The latter is next to you and together with you yet incapable of being in full-fledged storge with you.

In foreign storge, people live as a couple. Foreign storge always involves a couple that was unable to enter into storge in the final account (when triple storge turned out to be impossible).

Foreign storge is not tripartite but bipartite storge – storge without a storgic being. This is the most widespread type of storgic relationship. In the best of cases, foreign storge leads to storgic relations without the storgic being. In the worst of cases, it leads to dark storge.

In foreign storge, the storgic being is absent from the very start and, most importantly, can never be present. Foreign storge is foreign for the simple reason that it lacks a storgic being despite the existence of loving relations. The storgic being does not see this love or sees disparities in it that are overlooked by the partners themselves.

Although many of the processes that take place in self-induced storge also take place in foreign storge, the storgic being does not appear in the latter.

No one is immune to foreign storge. It is not a failure that constantly threatens the storgic process or a fiasco but the unsuccessful choice of the storgic partner. Two people have erroneously selected each other for storge. Foreign storge involves two storgically incompatible people.

The right idea is always an idea that has been correctly divined. In the same way, "one's other Self" is an "other Self" that has been storgically divined correctly. The storgic partner is either divined or not during the Encounter.

Foreign storge is incorrectly divined storge. The correct recognition of the storgic partner is a key task of human life as such. The storgic being is not a blind participant in storge but a participant with vision and thus with willpower. The right storgic choice can be made when the storgic being itself secretly participates in this choice.

Naturally, the storgic being participates in divining one's storgic partner not by saying "it's him!" or "it's her!" but by creating (surreptitiously and beforehand) a storgic intuition and a more or less distinct (though fanciful) image of one's storgic partner.

Although this applies to both men and women, it is particularly true of women, who are more tightly connected to their storgic being than men. A woman needs to have a male image suggested by her storgic being and preserves it until she meets her man. She would not recognize him otherwise.

The true storgic male image usually competes in the woman's soul with a false storgic image that is created by the psycho-physiological tastes of her female Selfhood and her female passions and tastes. These images do not coincide in general, and the woman must make a choice, which is a difficult and dangerous task.

Foreign storge is an error of storgic recognition or a storgic error, in which the participants choose the potentially wrong storgic partner for themselves and try to implement storge with him or

her. They could (and should) have been in their own storge yet have found themselves in foreign storge instead.

The Encounter in foreign storge can serve different goals such as family life with children or without, joint struggle, mutual aid and assistance or even mutual creation. However, it can never serve the appearance or development of one's own storgic being.

Foreign storge is not something unfinished, unformed or disrupted but an initial storgic error. Storge has been implemented, yet it is not one's own. Many people live in foreign storge without realizing it or admitting it to themselves. One can grow very attached to something "foreign." Yet it never becomes "your own."

You can leave this life without ever realizing what kind of storge marked your joint life. Foreign storge most often manifests itself at a moment of storgic trial, which may never occur. One should not think that the storge was different before the trial and then became foreign. On the contrary, it was always foreign yet has become patently foreign now.

For a man, foreign storge usually manifests itself when he realizes that his spiritual life cannot find an echo in the woman's soul. For a woman, foreign storge usually comes to the fore when she sees that there is nothing that she can absorb from the male higher soul, no matter how much she tries.

To tell whether storge is foreign or your own, one must create a difference of spiritual potentials within it, a spiritual voltage that puts it to the test of spiritual growth, making it disintegrate and disclose itself. One of the storgic partners makes a powerful spurt of spiritual growth and rises to a higher spiritual level that the other partner cannot attain by himself. It turns out that, in one of the central aspects of life (that has always existed before and has now become apparent), the partners do not merely have different views or develop differently but do not correspond to each other. Their alienation is not the result of a situation in which something impedes them but of the fact that they are foreign to one another, even though they love and are very much attached to each other.

Each person has his own level of intolerance of foreign storge. At a certain level of alienation, it becomes impossible to live together. You can make something foreign less foreign at the expense of tremendous effort. Foreign storge sometimes passes unnoticed. You can also conceal foreign storge from yourself or your storgic partner. You can "bypass" foreign storge to prevent it from becoming evident or destructive. You can make a "marriage agreement" that provides for foreign storge in conjugal life. Foreign storge is not something pre-storgic, however. It is developed storge, in which a storgic catastrophe is possible.

People do not know how to search for a partner to implement tripartite storge. They dream of finding him or her but do not know how to do it. They lack the necessary know-how as well as clear-cut notions about the unconditional spiritual value of storge and about the fact that storge is a lawful and intrinsic aspect of spiritual life – storgic spiritual life.

Each couple has its own storgic tensile force. Like a blind elemental force, this force keeps pulling the bow string tighter and tighter with no regard for where and at whom the arrow will fly and for what reason. Foreign storge is a fairly high level of storgic unity between a man and a woman. And it arises through a long and inexorable storgic process.

Foreign storge is one of the inevitable results of storgic work *per se*. We mortals may consider foreign storge to be a self-delusion of sorts. However, in human life, a storgic result is foreseen from above. This result is attained in one way or another. Storge is included in God's Plan for man, and foreign storge does not contradict this Plan. It is impossible not to create storge of some sort. Proper storge always arises amid a sea of foreign storge, and this is apparently enough.

10.

Numerous rooms, designs and purposes exist at different levels of the inner world of man. All of them are reserved for people (and, possibly, not just people) that one encounters in life. Each of them occupies his or her own room – separately or together with others. The rooms are all different: dark and light, large and small, nailed up, walk-through, open, for permanent or temporary residence, for childhood friends, for one's mother, wife, neighbor, director, teacher, student or hero. There are so many rooms that a human life is not enough to fill them all. A person sometimes does not even suspect of the existence of a room that he particularly needs. Or he looks for it without ever finding it. Certain special-purpose rooms or rooms intended especially for someone are created or destroyed in the course of life. The richness of a person's inner world depends to a considerable degree on his or her occupied rooms and the people that have settled in them.

There are very few luxury rooms on the upper floor. One of them, when empty, distinctly calls upon people to enter, yet someone who directly or indirectly wants to enter this room of storge must settle in the entrance hall and the first-floor rooms and pass through a series of walk-through rooms, in each of which he or she can get stuck without ever becoming "one's other Self." This is a long and difficult endeavor for which a lifetime may not suffice.

Another room on the upper floor does not (unlike the first) announce itself ahead of time, does not open up its doors for everyone to enter and, generally speaking, does not disclose itself until "one's other Self" settles in it – the other Self that is designated and destined exclusively for it. This is the room of the storge of revelation. A person knows that it exists yet only gains this knowledge together with the person that settles in it. The doors of the enfilade of rooms seem to open up on their own before "one's other Self," who immediately finds the room of the storge of revelation and settles in it. One can evict someone who settles in the room of the storge of revelation only by destroying it.

Storgic revelation indicates that the storgic being has come to life of its own accord in interpersonal life.

The storge of revelation is a mysterious phenomenon, because it is conceived and, to a large extent, implemented by the free will of the storgic being, which thirsts for self-realization and authoritatively intertwines the two people that it selects.

Ordinary storge passes through many successive stages until it finally becomes mature storge at an advanced age. In contrast, the storge of revelation does not need to pass through stages: it sets in at once, as if it had always existed and now finds a way of manifesting itself and launching storgic growth.

The storge of revelation is an undeniable though extremely rare existential phenomenon. The fact that people find each other for the storge of revelation is almost a miracle. Their lives are specially organized in such a way as to make the storge of revelation possible. One often lets the storge of revelation pass by, because pre-storgic love has already arisen for someone that life presented at the right moment. The storge of revelation occurs only once – once in a lifetime. It is offered only once and is implemented only a single time.

Every human soul consciously and partly subconsciously dreams about the storge of revelation. The storge of revelation is true love that every human being longs for.

The storge of revelation is such a positive and (mystically and metaphysically) significant phenomenon of human life that it does not evoke any questions of good and evil or of happiness and unhappiness. Everything grows pale beside the storge of revelation.

In itself, the human storgic will aims to attain the greatest possible result. All higher souls – the higher soul as such – seek the storge of revelation. The philic emotion in pre-storge also calls for the storge of revelation. Every human being waits for the storge of revelation. The storge of revelation is everyone's dream.

The storge of revelation differs from other types of storge by the instantaneity of its appearance. The storgic partner is immediately recognized by a separate trait of his – the timbre or modulations of his voice, his smile or his bearing. Although everyone sees this trait, it is storgic for one person only. And it may or may not correspond to the latter's taste for male or female beauty.

In the explosive process that is launched with the storge of revelation, the storgic being comes into action immediately and to the greatest possible extent. It has been waiting for this moment.

Other types of storge are implemented gradually and step by step by transferring the contents of the life of one higher soul to another. A person is prepared for storge, gradually gaining speed. Storge is realized in much the same way as a building is constructed and settled.

The storge of revelation is the best starting point for implementing storge. One has no need to gain speed in the storge of revelation. The Encounter of the storge of revelation occurs as if it had already taken place ages ago. It already exists and is predestined to appear by storgic fate. It only needs to manifest itself again. In the process, it renovates or replaces something, removes the building material, and takes down the scaffolding. At the moment of such an Encounter, both the man and the woman clearly realize that "I am yours." Every person waits for this intently and, for this reason, often mistakes his desires for reality.

Every person lives in the presentiment of the life of the storgic being in himself and together with his other Self. This presentiment is usually called love.

Infatuation is not only penetration and preparation, as we said earlier, but also the presentiment of the storgic being. During infatuation, a person calls on the storgic being, sends signals to it, and summons it to come and settle in him. During infatuation, the man and the woman invoke the storgic being, yet it does not always reply to their call.

Strange though it may seem, the arrival of the storgic being does not hinder repeated infatuation. The latter seems to call the storgic being not in order to be heard but to experience time and again the ecstasy of calling.

Infatuation is often lived as the storge of revelation, pretends to be the storge of revelation, and believes in it itself, experiencing storgic feelings that do not exist. Love-infatuation knows how to feign the storge of revelation. Such pseudo-storge of revelation falls apart sooner or later, yet people do not admit it and continue to feign storge. This is also common in foreign storge.

Just as all pretence, pseudo-storge is not lies and deceit but a real experience – an experience of something that does not exist, somewhat like pain in an amputated leg.

The pseudo-storge of revelation is free, irresponsible and passionate, because it bears the storgic being as a presentiment. Partners readily and joyously accept the notion (announcement) of a third being, for this promises such intense feelings and such bliss in love that have never existed, will never exist and can hardly exist.

Men and women live in the allure of the implementation of storge. This is legitimate, just as is the fact that they rarely attain it. What we called pre-storge above is most often pseudo-storge, which announces itself prematurely and at an impossibly high level. In the subsequent process of hard-earned

storge, this may prove fruitful or not. Yet it is always detrimental for the storge of revelation, because the storgic being does not participate in pseudo-storge.

Parting is a banal and everyday affair, while a storgic catastrophe belongs to the mystic and metastructural world.

The storge of revelation is a risky venture. Entering into the storge of revelation, a person recognizes subconsciously and in the depths of his soul his personal responsibility and knows and senses that parting is unimaginable and totally impossible. The storgic catastrophe occurs unexpectedly and to one's total bewilderment. Every storge calls for a lot of conscious and purposeful effort to avoid approaching the line beyond which the storgic catastrophe occurs. Every storge is attained and preserved through hard work.

There are anti-storgic women that are unable to enter into storge, do not want it and reject it. There are also non-storgic women that have difficulties entering into storge regardless of their relations with the storgic being. Women of a third type are storgically abandoned: they are not connected to a specific storgic being yet are capable of bearing it within themselves. A fourth type of storgic women strives for storge and knows how to create it.

The phenomena of spiritual life should be studied not bottom-up, as other natural phenomena, but top-down. To understand ordinary phenomena of spiritual life, one should first understand higher-level phenomena, even if they are unique. Storge, just as all spiritual phenomena, should be first studied in its highest forms.

The storge of man and woman is the highest form of the Encounter. The highest level of storge is Co-Itinerancy. Co-Itinerancy is the joint ascent of personal spiritual and storgic spiritual life of a man and a woman.

People in the state of Co-Itinerancy have the richest and most full-fledged storgic spiritual life. Co-itinerant storge is the full measure of human storgic spiritual life. Co-itinerant storge is created by co-itinerant women – the highest class of storgic women.

The co-itinerant woman creates Co-Itinerancy with a highly spiritual man. It is impossible to speak about Co-Itinerancy without first speaking about the man's Path of Ascent. We will describe the ascent of women in Co-Itinerancy after clarifying the Paths of Ascent of man in the next section about the principles and stages of human personal spiritual life.

Let us make a few preliminary remarks.

Most women are suited for storge. However, the general unpreparedness of women for Co-Itinerancy is even greater than the male unpreparedness for the Path of personal spiritual life. Women that can implement Co-Itinerancy are extremely rare. A co-itinerant woman is born, not made. Nevertheless, she needs to work hard to become co-itinerant. A co-itinerant woman is not one in a hundred thousand or a certain "type" but is singular and unique.

Not all storge strives for Co-Itinerancy. Only a co-itinerant woman can enter into Co-Itinerancy. Co-Itinerancy is a very special type of female spirituality – the highest type of all.

Co-Itinerancy is target-specific, and a co-itinerant woman is also target-specific. Co-Itinerancy is not prescribed but given, and, for this reason, Co-Itinerancy is possible with only one specific woman.

There can be several Encounters suitable for storge in a person's lifetime. However, Co-Itinerancy, just as the storge of revelation, is implemented only once, if at all. However, the Encounter for Co-Itinerancy is not necessarily given to a person as the storge of revelation and is not something inevitable. One must first try not to miss it and then to implement it.

It is important to choose whom you love, yet it also important to love whom you choose .

Just as there is the love of love and the love for love as such and for a human being as such, there is also the love for storgic love. The love for storgic love (cherubic love) is the feeling of the presence of the cherub in oneself before the storgic encounter takes place.

Cherubic love always accompanies the storge of revelation and Co-Itinerancy.

The love for storgic love can become stronger than storgic love itself. Cherubic love is one of the very few key values of life: it is an absolute value of the spiritual life of man. If such love is experienced by both partners, there is no way back. The return to the initial non-storgic state is possible only through a storgic catastrophe.

11.

Storgic spiritual life is more powerful in a woman than in a man. A woman's storgic intuition is stronger, clearer, more reliable, more productive and faster. This is quite understandable: a man is a participant in storge rather than the vehicle of storge. He is usually the second person in storge – a follower rather than a leader.

The female soul is connected to a storgic being from the start. By himself, a man cannot bind himself to the cherub. He can make a woman engage in a storgic relationship, bind her and her cherub to himself and launch the implementation of storge. However, it is the woman that allows her storgic being to engage in love (or not).

The good of a woman's spiritual life is storgic growth. The acceleration of storgic growth depends on both storgic will and the possibilities of the woman's soul, as well as on the richness, energy and personal spiritual state of the man that the woman has allowed into her and with whom she has entered into storgic union. The drama of a woman's fate on the Path is that the man is not always capable of enriching her spiritually. A woman can compensate for a man's inner insufficiency to a certain extent, yet storgic growth cannot be assured for long by the woman alone. No woman is capable of working storgically for herself and for her man at the same time.

No matter whether a woman wants it or not, her soul is always in someone's hands or passes from person to person. As a creature of Love, she always needs a man to satisfy her profound need of spiritually clinging to someone – whether to her father, her brother, her husband, her hero or her idol. If she has no one to cling to, she has no reason to live.

A woman's soul hungers for a man. Her body craves for children. To sate her soul and satisfy her body, she looks for an abode, i.e., a home and a family – her home, her family and thus her fate.³

The work of her soul is based on freedom, while fate is associated with constraint. The soul essentially functions as a vehicle of fate. Generally speaking, the woman is inseparable from her fate. A woman's fate primarily consists of her encounters. Her husbands, her children and everyone that she

³ Family inner life is suffused by the inner warmth of the woman. Family spiritual life is suffused by the light of the male reason, yet it is the wife that opens the way to family spirituality. Such is the model of high-caliber storge. The woman transforms male spirituality, turning it into family spirituality.

has loved, cared for, and worried about, are part of the whole picture that she takes with her from this life.

The signs of fate are given to her in the stream of encounters that consists of countless fortuities. These fortuities themselves and the life stream of encounters tend to organize a woman's fate, augmenting the compulsory nature of her itinerant existence.

For a woman, Fate and Encounter are virtually the same. She may turn out to be unworthy of her own fate or be unable to bear it.

It is seldom possible to understand and discuss a woman's soul as such, outside the context of her individual fate. A woman's soul is usually indissolubly connected with her fate and incorporated into it. For this reason, one can judge her soul only together with her fate. A woman with a lofty soul may have a mean fate that belittles her. In contrast, a lofty fate may be proposed to a base soul, either elevating it or debasing it even more.

A person as a unity is constituted through his or her entire life. However, men and women are "constituted" differently. A man is the totality of tribulations and states of his entire life. A woman is the totality (refracted through her) of all the people that she has encountered in her whole life and let into her soul. It is no surprise that a man recalls himself, while a woman recalls the things that happened to her, other people in relation to her, her biography, and the biography of her soul – the events of her life (that always leave a mark on the soul), her encounters, her collisions, her relations and her service.

From time immemorial, people respect women that primarily care for others (or at least seem to do so) and disdain lonely and childless women that have no female role to play in life. The woman's soul has the need to worry: a woman is alive so long as she worries about someone. This is her storgic trait.

The most important things for a woman are reliability, stability, protection, and the safety of existence – all the conditions that facilitate the task of caring. She is attentive to what is taking place around her as a school of real life. The feeling of danger, the apprehension of ill tidings, and a sense for the bad, the unsteady, the unreliable and the foreign are female merits recognized by the woman herself. She makes use of cunning and scheming for the purposes of protecting and preserving. Most women feel guilty not about failing to do something good but only about the occurrence of something bad that they had not managed to avert. This is another female storgic trait.

A woman does everything she can to become an abode and to put the abode of her hands and soul at the disposal of everyone that fate has entrusted her with – in particular, her children. Blessed is the man and the husband that knows what the inner abode of a beloved woman is all about.

A woman provides a man with security and hope. A woman has always been expected to be self-sacrificing, reliable and true. However, given that Eve guarded Adam while he cultivated, the expectations for the female functions of guarding and preserving depend on the male capacity of and activeness in cultivating. A man that has no goals that are inaccessible to the woman and that devotes himself to worldly goods, prosperity and existence (all of these are conditions of good guardianship) inevitably becomes the woman's breadwinning appendix and a male expression of female life tenets. It matters little here whether the man has male power, will and strength. Together with the woman, he lives on earth in a womanly way. In such a case, the woman's soul has virtually nothing to gain from the male soul. This is pleasant for a lazy soul yet lethal for a woman whose soul strives to realize its predestination.

The woman is a guardian. This means that she cannot exist alone without the thing that she is guarding with her soul. This may simply be the past: women remember what has happened a lot better

than men and are keepers of the past and of memory. The woman's role is to be keepers of life in all its forms: past, present and future, individual, family and societal. This is yet another female storgic trait.

The woman is the last bulwark of the national soul and its character, tenets and traditions. This explains the staunch female conservatism that is essential for the stability and successive continuity of the nation. She must transmit from generation to generation the beliefs and ethical values that she received. The national soul and women are dependent on one another: women are more inserted into the collective soul than men, although they participate in the collective soul differently than the latter. The national soul protects a woman and makes her steadfast in life. The woman herself relies on the ethical law of the collective soul, and this law relies on her. She requires a national soul that gives her clear commands. More than men, women give strength to the conscience of the collective soul. They are the guardians of moral actions without being their arbitrators.

At the same time, the growth of spiritual consciousness and free spiritual work in society take place virtually without women, who guard the national soul and preserve it from disintegration.

12.

Love often turns into hatred. There is a single step from the peak of storgic union to the abyss of storgic anti-love. Yet what a terrible and incomprehensible step it is!

Different factors and circumstances can turn a friend into a stranger and a wife into just a woman. Nevertheless, it is a completely different case when mutual life suddenly becomes anti-life: when a friend turns not into a stranger but into an anti-friend. The possibility of love turning into hatred and of a friend into an enemy/anti-friend indicates that our soul is capable of exchanging the radiant storgic spirituality that it experiences in storgic love into dark storgic spirituality that it experiences in storgic hatred.

The inner life can catch on dark storgic fire: in it, a person burns with the same power and the same freedom as in the fire of storgic love. People are just as loyal to dark storge as to storgic love and just as ready to give up their lives for it. A soul longs and strives to satisfy its need for dark storge just as much as its need for light storge. This is true despite the fact that the state of storgic anti-love is one of the vilest and most excruciating states of the soul.

Dark philic hatred focuses on the image of the enemy. It is the hatred of the enemy – of the stranger or foreign person. Dark storgic hatred is directed at one's own friend or neighbor who turns into a dark storgic partner. Brother against brother, daughter against mother, and the Ukrainian against the Russian are just a few typical examples of dark storge.

Storgic love requires the recognition of oneself in the other. Similarly, dark storge requires the recognition of one's anti-friend in the other. He becomes "one's other Self" with a minus sign. The dark storgic anti-partner, just as the storgic partner, is experienced in the fifth person.

One can respect a friend. However, one only experiences loathing for the dark storgic partner. Dark storgic loathing is one of the most terrible feelings a person can have.

A person's significance is determined by a fraction whose denominator is the person's opinion of himself and whose numerator is what he is in actual fact. It is easiest to raise your self-esteem through hatred – in particular, hatred of people that are close to you in one way or another or better to some extent. This is somewhat like jumping over a vaulting horse. Dark storgic loathing raises the denominator to the skies and casts the numerator into an abyss, greatly lowering the significance of a

person. There is a special type of hatred towards a real or imaginary opponent who serves as an object that one must surpass.

Another difference between dark storge and dark philia is that dark storge is not just hatred but also the love for hatred. An enemy is characterized by the feeling of hatred towards him. Dark storge is marked by the love for the hatred of the anti-friend.

Dark storge includes dark philia. In contrast, dark philia does not include dark storge. Dark philia serves and caters to dark storge.

Hatred is an aberration of self-esteem. It is impossible to remain in a state of dark philia forever. A fit of anger or indignation eventually dies down. Although dark storge sometimes subsides, it usually lasts forever. The reason is that dark storge is part of storgic rather than philic life.

Dark storge usually arises from the dissolution of realized storge or storgicity, though not always. Dark storgic motives arise from the dissolution of every close relation, whether friendship, kin affiliation, national ties or infatuation.

Just as there exist storge and storgicity, there also exist dark storge and dark storgicity towards a person who was or may have become a storgic partner. Dark storgicity can arise towards a competitor at the workplace, a fellow writer or artist, or a more successful opponent in love. It can be experienced by a provincial inhabitant towards an inhabitant of the capital. There is also the dark storge of a man with mediocre talents towards a genius that occupies the place that the mediocre man would have liked to occupy in his imagination. The envy for one's neighbor is a type of dark storgic feeling.

In foreign storge, storgic feelings are secretly mixed with dark storgic feelings. Foreign storge constantly risks turning into dark storge.

Dark storge never arises from the breakup of the storge of revelation, however.

Antisemitism is the dark storge of other nations towards the collective soul of Israel. The Jews live in a totally incomprehensible national mode that is alien and extremely suspicious (as if they come from another planet). The Jews seem suspicious to everyone, and this is one of the reasons why they often become the object of dark storge. The vector of the dark storge of antisemitism is supported by the suspiciousness of collective inner spirits to the collective inner spirit and deep national being of Israel.

One can give different explanations for what triggers and augments antisemitism (and how), yet it would be naïve to think that they are the causes of this eternal phenomenon of dark storge.

One can understand and explain the genesis and causes of the philic feeling of hatred. This is a purely human phenomenon. As to dissolved storgic love, it may or may not turn into dark storge. This process is irrational. Dark storge is irrational and poorly understood. The causes of dark storge are literally unfounded.

The true reason for the emergence of dark storge is the inner need for dark storge. Antisemitism gives an outlet for the dark storgic need of the human soul, which finds a means of satisfaction. Moreover, every collective spiritual power believes that it is unstable without dark storge.

The pernicious influence of dark storge on a person's life has not been fully appreciated. Dark storge is not simply an element of life but a diabolic phenomenon – perhaps the only diabolic phenomenon of human life.

All bad things in human life are mixed in one way or another with the good. The only exception is dark storge. Dark storge does not and cannot have any good consequences. The only way to

overcome it is to suppress it. However, this process does not facilitate growth in any way. Dark storge has no bright meaning. It destroys everything it touches.

At the same time, dark storge is a great temptation for the human soul – even more than bright storge. The replacement of storgic love by storgic hatred gives much greater pleasure than one had ever known in storgic love. Inspired by dark storge, one can make revolutions and destroy the lives of one's dearest people. Dark storge was at the root of the fall of Byzantium and the destruction first of Tsarist Russia and then of the Soviet Union.

Dark storge is a mortal illness of the soul – the personal soul and the collective soul. The mass dementia of a nation infected with dark storge is the worst thing that can happen to the national soul.

Most terribly of all, the loftiest (and, in particular, storgic) elements of the soul can turn into dark storge in the course of life. Another terrible fact is that destructive dark storge is easily aroused in a person and in the national soul.

There should never have been any dark storge in the inner world of a person realizing the Divine Plan – all the more so as such a person should have been prepared for it. Nevertheless, it arises. Where does it come from and why is it needed?

Adam violated God's interdiction on account of philic love. His son Cain killed his brother Abel (his successful competitor with regard to God's favor) on account of dark storge. God himself addressed Cain, the first-born human being on Earth, and explained the situation of earthly life in which he found himself after the expulsion from the Garden of Eden precisely in view of the dark storge within him.

In response to Cain's dark storgic dementia (he thought that he was being deprived of his primogeniture and, as a result, "Cain was very angry, and the expression on his face fell," Gen. 4:5), the Lord told him, "sin (*khatat*) crouches at the door. Its desire is for you, but you are to rule over it" (Gen. 4:7).

The word *khatat* used in this verse of the Book of Genesis has the same root consonants as the word *khet* 'sin', yet *khatat* in the Lord's commandment to Cain does not literally mean the same thing as sin.

Khatat is what precedes and produces sin (*khet*), and this is why it can and should be controlled. The verb *rovets* 'crouches' in this phrase is only employed with regard to livestock in Hebrew. *Khatat* is not any temptation or sin that, like a wild beast, does not wait for permission to enter the place where his prey is. It is dark storge, which, like livestock, lives where it is allowed to. *Khatat* is the source of the "sinful temptation" that leads to the sin of killing one's brother. It is something that engenders dark storge in the human soul.

Dark storge does not hide but stands at the entrance to the human soul and waits for a good occasion and excuse to gain control of it. The soul is receptive to it and readily enters a state of dark storge. Sometimes, it experiences as much joy from dark storge within itself as it should get from bright storge.

Dark storge is a mysterious, obscure and widespread phenomenon. Is it intrinsic to man as such?

Dark storge can gain control of you at any moment. It is always near, yet it never forces itself upon you or breaks down the door into your inner world. It only enters when the door opens before it and when you allow it to come in of your own accord. The trigger mechanism of dark storge is always cocked and ready to fire in the soul. This is how things stand, and they cannot be otherwise. Dark storge conditions human life on Earth. This is what God explained to Cain.

The dark storgic feeling is Cain's feeling in man. Cain killed his brother. He could have refrained from doing so, yet the dark storge would have remained in him. "But you are to rule over it", i.e., you should not allow it to enter, even if violently provoked.

In punishment, Cain became a fugitive and a wanderer, i.e., he was stripped of the possibility of entering into dark or bright storge with anyone.

13.

There are relations in human life that seem to exclude betrayal: parents and children, brothers and sisters, friends, and storgic partners. Dark storge often arises as a result of betrayal. Betrayal leading to dark storge is a common situation in private life. The same thing occurs in public life, yet it is less apparent. A revolution, no matter how morally or socially justified it is, is a kind of national betrayal.

The spirit of betrayal is always present in dark storge. Inner betrayal is a trait of all dark storge. Nevertheless, dark storge is a deeper existential phenomenon than betrayal. Betrayal is the typical outer guise of dark storge. In a certain sense, dark storge conceals betrayal. In his dark storgic feelings, a person strives to elevate himself above the person he betrayed. He vilifies the latter, augmenting betrayal. In turn, betrayal keeps fueling dark storge and does not allow it to die away.

Dark storge is an organic part of the criminal world. This world constantly lives in a state of dark storge. The criminal element is particularly well suited for expressing the dark storgic state of life. The criminal world cannot do without dark storge. The latter is a condition of its existence. The criminal world becomes a world under the impact of dark storgic feelings, lives off them, and is supported by them. All the values and notions of the criminal world are suffused with dark storge.

People usually believe that one's activities come first, then one's way of life, and finally one's values and worldview. I dare say that things are different with criminoids. Their worldview is based on a need for dark storge – for experiencing and implementing it. This inspires their way of life, which leads, in turn, to their activities.

Criminoids are not a psychological deviation but a particular human type with a particular makeup of the inner world. Criminoids are a particular kind of people that are vehicles of dark storge. Criminoids recognize other criminoids at first sight. They can get along or destroy each other. Any person who enters the criminal world must accept its dark storge.

The emergence of dark storge in public life is terrible and mysterious. This is the worst possible evil and calamity in human society. Dark storge is not specially invoked into human life but appears on its own and infects people. How does the infection spread? It spreads not through ideologists and politicians struggling for power and money and not on battlefields of any kind but, first and foremost, through criminoids that have obtained the freedom of action and self-expression.

Different classes in a state and different peoples in an ethnic group can live together for ages. There may be conflicts, of course, but no dark storge. Then special circumstances arise, and dark storge appears. Somebody inspires it.

Dark storge is not hatred or anger accompanying a struggle. An enemy is not the same as a dark storgic partner. Brothers can become enemies or dark storgic partners.

The criminal revolution of the 1990s in Russia showed how easily the criminal world merges with those who are supposed to fight it. They are the same people. They are neighbors connected by dark storgic relations in the most overt form – a form that is even more overt than the dark storge between the White and Red movements during the Russian Civil War.

If public dark storge appears, you can be sure that criminoids were its moving spirits. Whenever exceptional circumstances (such as civil war or national dementia) arise, dark storge is very rapidly engendered by criminoids. As soon as they get freedom of action and come out into the open (rather than acting out of the underground), they incite people to join them or infect them with dark storge. The dark storgic disease tends to live on for a long time even when its source disappears.

The object of dark storge may be one's friend, brother or father. Despite all its hatred, war is usually devoid of dark storge. In a war, you must win or even destroy your opponent. In contrast, dark storge calls for humiliating, debasing, dehumanizing and trampling your opponent underfoot. There are a lot of Sdomic elements here.

The criminoid element is usually considered to be something secondary – an accompaniment to historical events, which it can color yet not influence decisively. This is not entirely true. And, even if it is, it is not because things are that way but because the historical period of the criminoid element has not yet come.

Storge is spiritual life between man and woman on the side of the Encounter. The existence of homosexuality rejects a necessary condition of the storgic process – gender. Homosexuals cannot engage in storge. Storge is foreign to them. Moreover, homosexuality, which is based on an aversion to women and involves unnatural sexuality, takes an aggressive stance against natural sexuality. This is more than just anti-storgicity. In all its bodily and psychological manifestations, homosexuality strives to pervert the natural sexual need. For this reason (among many others), it is suffused with a dark storgic feeling towards everything that engenders storge.

A homosexual couple is not simply a non-storgic entity that cannot engage in storge: it is an anti-storgic entity. Homosexual experiences cannot lead through the Encounter to the higher soul; thus they castrate storgic spiritual life.

Homosexuality is darkly storgic by its very nature and by the deeply negative attitude of homosexuals towards storge, which is possible only between a man and a woman. The dark storge of homosexuality contradicts the human striving to realize the Divine Plan.

14.

Storge leads to the synergy of deep layers of inner life and to the highest fullness of the latter in human beings. In collective inner storge, a person surpasses himself. More than anything else, this serves to consolidate collective inner life.

The motif of dark storge is included in collective inner life as such. Dark collective inner storgicity compels one to love his hatred as his own self.

Dark storge lies in wait for a nation and can overcome it at a moment of spiritual weakness – especially during revolution and civil war.

The spirits of revolution are the same everywhere. One does not have to search for them. They are dark storgic spirits. They make use of different types of contemporary slogans calling for the struggle for freedom, equality, brotherhood, social justice, democracy, human rights, national identity, communism and the world order. The Parisian crowd that brought the Jacobins to power was drunk with dark storge against priests and aristocrats. The same thing was true of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Dark storge also played a major role in the events of 1991 in Russia.

All the revolutions and ensuing civil wars are darkly storgic. Collective national dark storgic feelings intensify on the eve of civil war. This derives from the very nature of dark storgic desires. One cannot proclaim the ideas generated by dark storge without calling for revolution and civil war. All the revolutions of the Modern Era began in this way.

Today, all cultured Russian people are once again taking such a stance on current events as if they were longing for civil war. With regard to dark storge, they are already in a state of civil war. They may well get it.

By its very nature, public dark storge engenders civil war and, by its very existence, incites people to engage in it. Social, national or religious division is just a mechanism and an excuse for dark storge to realize itself. The object of dark storge may be a class or other ethnic entity or something illusory or semi-imaginary. Generally speaking, the spirits of revolution live in a dark storgic land of fantasy rather than in reality.

Collective spiritual dark storge has to be painstakingly cultivated by dark cultural means. Dark philia comes over the national soul like a fire, making it burn with dark storge.

The twenty-first century may well become the century of dark storge. All Russians that were abandoned by Yeltsin's government in the former Soviet republics experienced the pressure of dark storge kindled by nationalism. Russians have not ceased to be Ukrainians or Ukrainians Russians, yet they are increasingly becoming dark storgic Ukrainians or Russians. The entire Middle East and some North and South African countries have been infected with dark storge. Some European and North American countries are next in line. The most unexpected combinations may arise here.

Dark storge naturally emerges in every civil war (even in a feudal system), yet it subsides after the end of the war or a change of government. As a result, dark storge does not take root in the nation. Russian class-based civil war was unique insofar as the winners continued to cultivate dark storge in peacetime on a permanent basis.

Dark storge is not an inherent part of the socialist system as such. However, its inculcation in the Soviet Union was initially motivated by a practice of social engineering that was implemented for ideological reasons. Soviet people absorbed dark storge from childhood: in their education and worldview, they became people of societal dark storge.

The main vice of Soviet socialism and its misfortune and downfall was the fact that this system was based on dark storge. The immense danger of inculcating dark storge can be seen from the fact that its traces are still visible in the attitudes of people that had been born shortly before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Dark storge was one of the key aspects of this immense country in the 1930s and 1940s. It predominated during certain periods, turning people into a community for which the collective inner feeling of the neighbor was replaced by an affinity based on storgic hatred. Towards whom? Towards the "enemy," of course. Naturally, one often spoke about foreign enemies and international

imperialists, yet, in actual fact, the arrow of dark storge was always aimed at the domestic enemy – the dark storgic neighbor.

From the standpoint of dark storge, this “enemy” is not a stranger but a neighbor and one’s countryman to whom the bright feeling of neighborly love should spread. It is not enough (and not so important really) to identify who the “enemy” is. The main thing is to find him among one’s closest people – one’s father, husband, brother or friend.

The recognition of the “enemy” in one’s neighbor is a storgic encounter in negative form. The “enemy” is the neighbor that must be done away with after his higher soul is stripped of all its vestments. This is the reason why unmasking became a cult activity. People were forced to renounce their parents, children, wife and friends. Punitive agencies are holy in a dark storgic society, for they unmask enemies, who are said to be everywhere. State security is the main source of dark storgic spirituality. Storgic hatred in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s was considered to be a mark of honor – the highest spiritual merit of all citizens loyal to the regime. People were told not to relent in their dark storgic hatred even for a moment! This is how children were educated and adults reeducated.

The atmosphere of general wariness that overcame an enormous country in a short period of time and the search for “enemies” among one’s neighbors resulted in the defamation of the bright storgic feeling of friendship and its replacement by compulsory “comradeship” in storgic hatred. Only in such collective inner conditions was it possible to organize mass starvation and implement dekulakization and collectivization that uprooted the nation and annihilated the guardians of national storge – the Russian peasantry.

By the agapic feeling proclaimed in the sixth commandment of the Sermon on the Mount, you should love the enemy that hates you. In contrast, the apex of dark storge is the hatred towards friends that you love. Such a worldview is, of course, best expressed by Pavlik Morozov, the ten-year-old boy who was carried away by Soviet storgic hatred towards his father.

Dark storge became the foundation of morals. It was not immorality but a sort of public moral monstrosity. Thanks to storgic dualism, love and hatred towards one and the same person can coexist in the soul. For Soviet people, love was a private matter, while dark storgic loathing was a public affair.

The dark storgic totalitarian consciousness is not “black and white.” Dark storgic feeling cannot experience “white” – it only experiences “black.” For it, “white” is something that is totally “non-black.” In the Kingdom of Dark Storge, one must not simply defame all that is bright while preserving some kind of veracity but turn all that is bright into the darkest black. The more coarsely this is done, the better.

All that is white must be called black, and vice-versa, not for the sake of tricking people or of deceit as such but as philic support for dark storgic solidarity. In this dark solidarity, one cannot call a righteous man a sinner – that would be unconvincing. To persuade the dark storgic feeling, one must say that he is an outright rascal. In the Kingdom of Dark Storge, one does not become “black” but is declared to be so. Here one is expected to hate his beloved friend, if he is declared to be an “enemy.”

The key word of the 1930s, “vigilance,” expressed the rule of dark storge with great literary precision. One understood “vigilance” to mean not only the search for “enemies” among one’s neighbors but also the search for objects of collective inner hatred of all kinds. In the 1930s, the atmosphere of total intimidation catalyzed the psychological life of national souls to an extent that is usually seen only in wartime. The regime gave anyone who wanted to satisfy his dark storgic need the opportunity to do so by submitting a denunciation to the all-powerful secret police. This dark storgic need turned out to be incredibly strong in people at the time...

“Total fear” naturally existed in a society that was consolidated by dark storge. For that generation, the fear of the secret police combined both dark storgic and psychological horror. This was

the fear of becoming the target of super-personal and collective storgic hatred that emanated from the collective inter-psychic force. The hypnotic force of this fear was so great that stripped even the most courageous people of their willpower, ability to think and capacity to protest.

Soviet dark storge in its pure state existed in the late 1920s and 1930s. Subsequently, during the years of struggle with a real enemy, it receded into the background. After the war, the regime tried to revive dark storge (the campaign against “cosmopolitanism”).

Dark storge abated after Stalin’s death, only to resurface unexpectedly in the second half of the 1980s in a paradoxical and terrifying form. Then something extraordinary began, and we can still hardly understand it.

PART 2

THE PERSONAL SPIRITUAL LIFE OF MAN. THE MALE PATH OF ASCENT

1 (15).

As a biological psycho-physiological being, man is created and structured in a way that can be described in a cohesive doctrine. However, as a spiritual being leading a spiritual life, man is not only incomplete but has not even reached the stage of maturity. Man does not lead the spiritual life of which he is capable. And thus it is impossible to create a doctrine of the inner life of man by examining man as we know him.

Spiritual life differs from inner life in that it is prescribed ahead of time. Spiritual life is, first and foremost, growth, and thus the doctrine of spiritual life is always a doctrine of the future with regard to the present and a doctrine of the transfiguration of spiritual life. It cannot be otherwise.

Human life creates something that it did not contain before. Man is made and lives for work that he must perform in accordance with God’s Plan and grows towards what is prescribed for him. All the transfigurations of man, in our opinion, target not man himself and his well-being but the attainment of a new stage in the implementation of the Plan for him.

People tend to consider that the spiritual life boils down to the collective spiritual life – collective, collegial and confessional life. They put their souls into it, serve it for millennia, and put their lives down for its tenets. They strive to develop only it, they are inspired by it, and they place their hopes on it. People believe that their own spiritual life is not a separate life but a specific life that differs from others yet is nevertheless part of the collective spiritual life. However, the latter, in our opinion, is life on only one of three sides of the inner world of man. In addition to living a spiritual life in the collective inner world, man has a spiritual life on the other side of his inner world – his private or personal spiritual life. Spiritual life on the third side – the side of the Encounter – is storgic spiritual life that arises in the love between a man and a woman. All three sides and lives have equal merit. None of them is more (or less) important and full-fledged than the others.

Collective spiritual life has been developing for millennia and transforming for centuries. In contrast, the transfiguration of personal spiritual life takes place within a human lifetime during a historical period.

In the days of Seth and Enos, people lived exclusively personal inner and personal spiritual lives yet could not manage the inner freedom that came with such a lifestyle and defiled themselves and the Earth as a result. God had to send the Flood and bring man into the mode of unified collective human soul. When people tried to build the Tower of Babylon “whose top may reach unto heaven,” God saw what “the sons of men had built” and that “nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them” (Gen. 11:6). He decided to divide the collective human soul into a myriad of collective souls of different nations. From this time on, man has lived on two sides: collective inner and collective spiritual life, in which he lives together with others, and personal inner and personal spiritual life, which take place not in a community of souls but in a singular separate soul with its own forces and potentials.

Collective spiritual life predominates in man. Personal spiritual life is not separated from collective spiritual life, is not set apart in people’s minds and is not accepted by people as independent spiritual life. People tend to approach their personal spiritual life exclusively from the standpoint of collective spiritual life and for its merit. It is as if the experience of personal spiritual life were valuable only when one could use it for the purposes of collective spiritual life. Yet this is not so.

One should distinguish between personal spirituality and the spirituality of a spiritually united nation. The latter is accessible to all (to a greater or lesser extent) and appeals to every soul, which must simply integrate itself into the collective soul (something people willingly help each other to do). In contrast, it is impossible to teach someone to live his or her personal spiritual life. Personal spiritual life is elitist. Not everyone is capable of leading it. One can only help someone who is capable of leading it and wants to do so.

In the reservoir of collective spirituality, everything is ready for the life of everyone. A person must simply draw from this reservoir to attain something that has been attained before him and will continue to be attained afterwards. Here everything depends on the capabilities of a given soul, its hard work, and the conditions accorded to it. Something is “born” in the soul as a result of its determined efforts. It is born (rather than simply being found), because it had not existed before and because it cannot be simply produced through a person’s efforts. The personally spiritual person must always be ready and stay in a working and “childbearing” state without knowing what will come of it.

Spiritual growth is neither the improvement of already existing qualities nor the perfection of the properties and abilities given to a soul nor the acquisition of new and additional qualities and talents. The main criterion and the main achievement of spiritual growth is the “augmentation of life,” the greater fullness of life, and a higher vitality and rationality than before.

Spiritual growth is one of the key fundamental motives of human life. The aim of personal spiritual life is to accelerate spiritual growth. The aim of collective spiritual life is to create, consolidate, and preserve what has been created before (no matter what level of creation was attained) and to stabilize it.

The collective soul develops in the historical perspective, carefully weighing its every step and recognizing its responsibility for changes. Personal spiritual life lacks foundations, centuries-old traditions, and the definiteness and authoritativeness that make collective spiritual life so stable. The efforts of personal life tend to be unexpected, unpredictable and unfounded.

In the act of personal spiritual growth, a person becomes higher and deeper than he was before, finding (by himself) hereto unknown deep layers of life and reason. Such a leap to a higher level of

spirituality, spiritual fullness and freedom leads to the transfiguration (and thus abolishment) of immobile and long-established inner life.

Inner peace is one of the main values of collective spiritual life. Collective spiritual life strives for peace and considers peace of mind to be a blessing. For personal spiritual life, inner peace is at best respite and rest in the midst of growth pains rather than a goal, a blessing or a sign of the latter. Personal spiritual life needs struggle – struggle not with reality or for improving reality or, in general, in the domain where “reality” lies. This struggle takes place in the Kingdom of God that is “within us.”

Collective spiritual life is largely directed towards the past, where the sources of tradition are found, and towards the future, where one’s hopes lie. Personal spiritual life arises exclusively at the present moment. The past concerns it only as a trace found in the present, and the future has no meaning, because the future does not give it the direction of motion. Personal spiritual life is inspired by the present rather than the future. It is directed into the present where the path-defining feeling of one’s predetermination and perfect expression calls it at the present instant.

In collective spiritual life ideal states are attainable in principle (or even always) either through the extraordinary efforts of man or by divine grace. In contrast, personal spiritual life strives for an *a priori* unattainable Ideal that acts as the driving force of spiritual growth.

Personal spiritual life moves not from original to likeness or from likeness to likeness but towards what has never existed and will never exist but exists now in the feeling of envisaging oneself as one should be.

Life in the collective inner stream tends to go by feelings that are common to all and shuns doubt, ignorance and searching. The collective soul is a soul that is necessarily firm and firmly believing. Questioning is not intrinsic to collective spiritual life and is even frowned upon.

In contrast, doubts, searching, mental anguish, and even indecisiveness and timidity are natural to personal spiritual life and make up its inner vitality. Questioning is one of the foundations of personal spiritual life. Questioning means taking an interest in life. It is the beginning of spiritual growth. A person who leads a personal spiritual life always leads a questioning life. Independence, self-reliance, and the striving to know oneself are the generic traits of personal spiritual life. Their dignity testifies to the dignity of the latter.

In collective inner life, the dignity of each person is measured in comparison to other people. The dignity of a person in personal spiritual life cannot be compared to others but lies in what he is with regard to his own self and to what he could have become: is he lower, equal or (very rarely) higher than himself?

Collective spiritual life is made beautiful by self-sacrifice that is usually connected with feats or the ecstatic striving for them. The supreme act of personal spiritual life is self-renunciation yet not self-denial, asceticism, the sacrifice of oneself or one’s own, the death of what you renounce or even the diminishment of strength. For self-renunciation in personal spiritual life, you do not have to mortify anything in yourself. In contrast to self-sacrifice, it is the result not of determined efforts but of long and intense spiritual growth.

The collective spiritual person feels himself responsible, above all, to Someone or someone above himself. The personal spiritual person recognizes, above all, his responsibility to himself, to someone in himself.

Personal spiritual life mostly manifests itself in struggle and surmounting. You can never attain a higher point of yourself just like that, without effort.

Personal spiritual life grows by overcoming “obstacles” that life places in large quantities in one’s way. For collective spiritual life, it would better if there were no obstacles at all. The main ability in

collective spiritual life is not to allow temptation to arise, not to let it enter you, and to shut the door of the soul before it.

Collective spiritual life always strives to organize the life of person in a way that would serve its own interests. Personal spiritual life takes place in an existential field that is not organized in any special way. Personal spiritual life uses the sorrows of a life full of suffering and misfortune for self-revival and spiritual growth. All obstacles, obstructions, barriers, traps and even calamities to be overcome are necessary for a person leading a personal spiritual life. His work draws on suffering that the collective spiritual person considers to be an evil.

In collective spiritual life, the escape into other worlds or into a meta-human state of consciousness or life is considered to be the supreme achievement of an adept and is used as an attractive force and as evidence of the truth of a religious doctrine.

Personal spiritual life prohibits one from abandoning his post and going beyond the boundaries of human life. Otherwise, the obstacles necessary for spiritual growth would be eliminated, and personal spiritual life would lose its meaning.

Monotheistic religions teach that everything takes place according to God's will and for the sake of man and his prosperity, bliss and salvation. From the personal spiritual standpoint, man is not God's beloved child but God's worker, His work and His instrument that strives not for his own prosperity but for the implementation of God's supreme will.

2 (16).

It is important for a person to recognize the contradiction between personal and collective spiritual life in order to get his bearings in his inner life and understand the Sources of both.

Collective spiritual religious feelings are inculcated and developed by Faith. Collective spiritual life is based on devotion and steadfastness that are inculcated by faith/fidelity. Religious doctrine is the stance of the Collective Soul on the main issues of life. From the standpoint of the collective soul, truth is what is declared to be such by religious doctrine or, at least, objectively proven.

In collective spiritual life, the most important thing is not truth but fidelity – fidelity to Faith, collective spiritual tenets and the key elements of the worldview. Faith, no matter what it is, is always true insofar as it rejects the question of truth and falsehood and cannot be anything else other than true.

The concept of collective spiritual Faith has nothing to do with the concept of veracity in the personal spiritual sense and vice-versa.

In personal spiritual life, the question of fidelity to faith does not arise. The main question is the genuineness or non-genuineness of spiritual life and of spiritual hypocrisy or sincerity. An insincere person is not capable of personal spiritual life, just as a non-believer is incapable of collective spiritual life.

Personal spiritual reason has its own revelations. Although they may be unoriginal in the history of human wisdom, they are new to a person. These revelations – the revelations of one's own wisdom – arise from the heart's ability to empathize, penetrate and fathom (first and foremost, with regard to one's own inner life and the paths of its transformations).

A person who searches for truth with the help of his own wisdom does not grope in the dark. The person who relies on his own wisdom has a sense of truth and of the direction that leads to truth.

One's own wisdom is particularly sensitive to all that true, important or unimportant, i.e., it has an intuition for deep thought. This is an essential condition for the functioning of one's own wisdom.

One's own wisdom always involves listening – either to one's own soul or to another soul or to living souls in general (but not to things). One's own wisdom only fathoms the animate and can act only where it senses a living soul. One's own wisdom can fathom the soul of another person or of a dog, horse or even cockroach – but not the Universe and its laws. It does not see anything in the material world – it cannot and does not want to see it. The sphere of the inanimate is inaccessible to one's own wisdom.

The vision of one's own wisdom is a holistic form of perception of a living soul. One's own wisdom deals not with parts but exclusively with the whole. One could say that it is incapable of dividing anything into parts. This does not mean that it immediately grasps something fully. Perceiving the holistic picture of spiritual life, one's own wisdom interprets the self-explications of reason in a new way each time, hears them differently and produces new holistic pictures. No two interpretations are ever alike. However, they all bear the mark of the personal spirituality of their author.

Personal spiritual reason always seems to perceive something: one thing today, and another tomorrow. The question of the empirical utility of one's own wisdom is never posed. One's own wisdom cannot be checked with the help of logic, either. It is extra-logical. The more sincerely a person expresses the work of his own reason, the more likely he is to make contradictory assertions. He who does not contradict himself is either untruthful in his thought or has not begun to think.

The extra-logical nature of one's own wisdom is an undoubted blessing. It cannot be used by man for building machines. It is impossible to employ it in a utilitarian fashion. It is not suitable for that.

One cannot perpetrate evil in the world with one's own wisdom, nor can it be used to evil ends.

Wisdom thinks in a living manner. As everything that is spiritually alive, it can grow freely, on its own, becoming increasingly perceptive and acquiring an ever greater maturity and depth.

One's own wisdom does not need any proofs of truth: it recognizes truth and falsehood, distinguishes between what is important and what is not, and, most importantly, finds "its own truth," whose veracity is shown by one's own intuition for profound thought. One's own wisdom is an instrument that the soul uses to recognize its own truth. One's own truth is the personal reasonableness and wisdom of one's heart.

A person finds his own truth not through proof, trust or a general conviction in its validity, as is the case for collective spiritual truth, but through its personal consistency, veracity and inner cogency.

"One's own truth" is not something that has been objectively proven or scientifically accepted but the veracious solution of the basic questions of human life as such: its goals, meaning, posthumous fate, and values. One's own truth gives personal answers to an individual person's questions about life and death.

A person usually tries to gain an understanding for the purposes of his life: it is easier to live the latter when one understands it. One understands in order to live. Things are opposite in personal spiritual life: one lives to understand ever deeper, to increase the plenitude of wisdom within himself ever more, to fathom his own truth ever deeper, and to grow in spirit.

One's own truth is the truth of one's heart and especially one's heartfelt attitude towards human life. A person can only divine his truth – not with his brain or intellect but with his wisdom.

The right idea, i.e., one's own truth, is always the correctly divined idea.

The work of divining the way to truth is almost always automatic. One's own wisdom keeps roaming, i.e., searching, supposing, penetrating, digressing and searching once again. However, as soon

as it detects even the faintest sign of veracity, it immediately stops roaming. During this pause, one's own wisdom behaves as it were following a scent in the anticipation of spiritual pleasure.

When a person is faced by the necessity of solving existential problems, he tries to grasp the totality of the situation in which he finds himself, takes a panoramic look at it, and asks, "What should I do? Where is the truth? What and whom can I trust? What is more (or less) important, valuable and necessary? What is the principal thing? What comes first and what second? What is good and what evil? How should I live? What should be the general order of thought? What should I think about first and what next?" To all these questions a person, first and foremost, seeks ready answers within himself.

One's own wisdom is constantly in the process of recognizing, knowing and understanding from within itself—something similar to remembering what you already know. You recognize what you know with the help of your own wisdom through inner listening. The joy obtained from a discovery made by your own wisdom and from its very work is always the joy of recovering something that had been "lost" in the soul, as if something were resurrected in it, as if it were revived. I think, and therefore I revive. Anyone who has experienced this overwhelming joy at least once in his life has no doubt noticed that, no matter what was revealed to him at that moment, he felt love for everything and everyone. To recognize someone (yourself or the other in yourself), you need a particular inner sensitivity that stems from love. Not only action but also the transfer of wisdom is difficult or even impossible without love. And we should thank God for that!

Collective spirituality inculcates a sense of duty and moral responsibility. Ethical tenets are rules established by the Collective Soul on its own territory. The moral sense is unfree, as it is based on what is accepted as an ethical norm by the Collective Soul at a given moment, what is declared praiseworthy or reprehensible, good or evil. Ethical tenets and morality are designed to restrain egoistic (i.e., anti-social) desires and intentions.

In contrast to collective spiritual life, personal spiritual life sets down no definite rules or commandments that must be followed. Everything depends on the level of a person's moral spiritual sense at a given moment. This sense sets down a personal commandment within the person that is only binding at a given stage of his life.

The principle of non-action is good insofar as it makes action depend on the level of the spiritual sense that corresponds to the sensitivity of the moral sense and the moral will.

"An eye for an eye" is the principle of just retribution on which the morals of human society, including legal society, are based. The fifth commandment of the Sermon on the Mount that one should not employ violence to resist evil is usually considered to be an unattainable ideal of the moral law and a continuation of the law of just retribution raised to its highest level—to the ethical apex. Nevertheless, it is not moral idealism but the proclamation of a free moral sense that starts from the ethical law as such. The fifth commandment opposes moral freedom (the ideal of non-violence) to social commandments of the highest level (the ideal of justice).

In its elementary form, the free moral sense is known to morally sensitive people that detect and expose unobvious immorality when they react with inner anguish to a villainous or morally base act that is nevertheless not overtly prohibited ethically and that most people would consider to be morally acceptable (recall the hero of Tolstoy's *Resurrection*) or a trifle not deserving moral indignation.

Moral precepts are based on social ethical considerations that one should not harm society or other individuals. "Don't do unto others what you don't want others to do unto you."

The moral sense of personal spiritual life derives from the moral intuition of a soul and is directly based on the freedom of the personal moral sense: “Don’t do anything that would not correspond to your free moral sense, i.e., to your conscience – your conscience and not the conscience of another person or of everybody.”

The richness, fullness and dignity of the free moral sense (a person’s own conscience in his personal spiritual life) exclusively depend on the level of a soul’s moral spiritual consciousness. The personal conscience cares little for what ethical norms approve or disapprove.

The ethical consciousness is fluid and amenable. It can be tricked. In contrast, the free moral sense that is based on moral intuition cannot be tricked.

Personal spiritual life is illuminated by the free moral sense and moral intuition that expresses the active freedom of the soul rather than its ethical accountability. The free moral sense is never rigorous, as it is based not on immutable norms (as the collective spiritual moral consciousness) but on Sincerity and the Ideal. From this standpoint, too, Sincerity is an essential condition for full-fledged personal spiritual life. In the latter, Sincerity is an effective force that is just as powerful as reason. Honesty and sincerity are spontaneously suffused by the spirit during personal spiritual growth.

3 (17).

It would be wrong to say that the sense of one’s own truth and one’s own conscience is known to all or even to many. Indeed, one could hardly say that they are accessible to all or many. One’s own truth and one’s own conscience are the domain of a rare few that have a spiritual sense of truth and a moral spiritual sense.

One’s own truth is not a truth that has been proven or accepted according to a centuries-old tradition or by religious or scientific consent. Generally speaking, it is not an assertion but the revelation of a certain level of manifestation of the spiritual sense of the truthfulness of the soul of a given person. One’s own truth is procured by the intuition of profound thought and accepted on account of its veracity for the spiritual sense of truthfulness. One’s own truth is not knowledge but an element of the personal spiritual sense of truthfulness that corresponds to the level of manifestation of the spiritual sense of truthfulness in a person’s soul.

In the same way, one’s own conscience is the revelation of the soul’s free moral spiritual sense.

Illuminated by the rays of the spiritual sense of truthfulness and of the free moral spiritual sense, people leading a personal spiritual life tend to be guardians of their conscience or truth. Where do these rays come from?

The rays of the spiritual sense of truthfulness and of the free moral spiritual sense enter a person’s soul not from an impersonal or super-personal entity or from a collective Source but from a personal source. They act only in this person (and only through him) and in no other.

The beams of the spiritual sense of truthfulness and the moral spiritual sense do not illuminate the inner world of man as such but only of a person that is familiar with their closest source. Leo Tolstoy called it the “closest spiritual sun” or “one’s God.” We shall call it the personal seraph.

One’s own truth and one’s own conscience is not given to a person genetically, astrologically or in any other way. A person’s innate or acquired abilities may well cause a seraph to take interest in him, yet nobody and nothing can ever take the decision for the seraph or make a person’s personal spiritual life function.

One cannot appropriate what emanates from a seraph or acquire it by force or hard work. One can only manifest it in himself after receiving it from his own seraph.

A seraph participates in the vital movements of a person that leads a joint life with him and absorbs the seraph into himself to augment his fullness of life. A person can increasingly grasp his truth with his wisdom, because he bears his seraph. He who does not bear a seraph within him is incapable of this.

Every person with a personal spiritual life has a seraph of his own. The personally spiritual person and his seraph exist in a single system of life and living. The personally spiritual person is sent into worldly life by his seraph, and the same seraph accepts him back in a certain sense.

One can call the personal spiritual life of a person his seraphic life.

In contrast to the “foreign” truth that people usually go by, one’s own truth is the truth of seraphic life. Only a person who has his own truth can have ideas of his own.

In contrast to the “foreign” conscience that people usually assume, one’s own conscience is the conscience of seraphic life.

The fuller and more vividly the spiritual sense of truthfulness of the seraph and his moral spiritual sense are manifested, the more vivid and powerful one’s own conscience and truth become. Moreover, one’s own truth and conscience are the sense/feeling of the seraph manifested in a person. The seraph senses himself in a person, and the person senses his seraph in his own truth and conscience, i.e., in his seraphic life.

To say that the spiritual sense of truthfulness enters a soul is the same as to say that the seraph enters and becomes me, and I become him.

One’s own truth and one’s own conscience become manifest in a person (and, in this sense, become his) when the seraph enters him.

The seraph feels and is aware of himself in a person as the latter’s own truth (procured by his own wisdom) and own conscience (procured by his free moral sense). When we speak about a person’s own truth and own conscience, we surmise the existence of a seraph in the person’s soul.

The seraph manifests himself in a person above all through the presence of the spiritual sense of truthfulness and the moral spiritual sense. Their fullness and worth depend on the level of the spiritual sense of the personal seraph.

One’s own truth and one’s own conscience is the sense/feeling of the life of one’s own God or one’s own seraph in a person’s soul.

The seraph gradually manifests his sense/feeling of life in the soul of a person living a seraphic life and, in this way, determines his vital movements. He expects something from the person.

In our understanding, the personal seraph is not a seraphim, a celestial angelic being or an archangel but a post-human being (or, more precisely, a post-human being with particular merit in comparison to other post-human beings) that is engendered through many human lives. From himself, he sends a person into life, gives him his particular purpose in life and the main parameters of his personal spiritual fate. The seraph makes the ascent together with the person.

A person gets his life mission from his seraph along with support for realizing it. Constituting a couple with his seraph, a person works for him, gives him from worldly life what the seraph needs for his existence, and raises him to a higher stage of his ascent. The seraph lives off the results of human life and directs it to a greater or lesser extent.

The entire second volume of *The Emergence and Transfiguration of Man* is devoted to the creation of the seraph (and cherub), his (their) role in the Plan, and different problems of interaction between man and the seraph.

The seraph does not “enter” a person or “leave” him in the common sense of the word. He always remains where he is – in the post-human world. Nevertheless, we will provisionally speak of the entry of the seraph into the personal spiritual life of man.

One’s own truth is not what people believe or what has been proven but a product of the determined effort of the personal spiritual consciousness. One’s own truth is born in the soul of a person together with the seraph. This “birth” takes place in the course of a person’s spiritual growth yet does not occur simply at his desire but together with the growth of his seraph.

It may seem at first sight that one’s own wisdom functions disconnectedly and without a guiding principle – simply at one’s whim. Yet this is not so. One’s own wisdom does not “blow where it pleases.” The discovery of one’s own truth, whether in small bits or large fragments, is a much more difficult task than the consecutive development of the intellect. One’s own truth has a rigid and mysterious order. The harmony of this order and this progress of one’s own truth is not set down by man or his laws but by the superhuman life of one’s seraph, which is beyond human comprehension.

One’s own truth emerges not in the process of cognition but in the process of the mutual personal spiritual life of man and his seraph. One’s own wisdom tries to understand a preceding thought not because a subsequent thought follows from it but because it is born later in the life of a seraph within a person.

Each movement of one’s own wisdom is based not on a preceding thought or on logic but on the level of manifestation of the spiritual consciousness of truth in the soul. One’s own truth can never emerge before the corresponding level has been attained. The life of the seraph is gradually manifested in the mosaic picture of wisdom. The harmony of this picture is determined by the history of the manifestation of the seraph in the inner world of man. This process is different for each person and his seraph.

However, no perception of one’s own truth can occur ahead of its time or take a place other than its own. One never knows what will be manifested first and what next and on what level. One’s own truth can never manifest itself prematurely. One cannot understand it even when it has already been divined yet still not supported by the corresponding level of spiritual consciousness in the soul. Unable to take root, it remains suspended in the air for the time being.

The personal seraph assigns a particular time for each fruit of a person’s own wisdom. One cannot get the seraph’s insight at will. Nevertheless, one must work hard in his personal spiritual life to prepare himself for each insight. For certain insights, one lacks the necessary distance of life.

How can one call and address his seraph and in what person?

One cannot do it in the first person as if he was addressing his Self with which the seraph, as a source of spiritual attraction, fuses. Nor in the second person as “you,” for the seraph does not have the likeness of a person nor is kindred to the latter’s “I.” Nor in the third person, which is used for an outsider or someone who is absent. To address the seraph, one needs to use a different person that would be neither first nor second nor third in a positive or negative form but would comprise all of them and, at the same time, be the expression of heartfelt emotion.

A person recognizes and experiences the seraph as the seed of his personal spiritual life and as his paternal primordial image.

From the grammatical standpoint, the “father” is such a “he” that contains the “I” along with an “I” that is fuller and more “holistic”: it is the “I” that engendered my “I” from himself. The son perceives

his father and addresses him not in the first, second or third person. For the son, the father is in the fourth person. However, with regard to his biological father, a son strives sooner or later for self-distinction in order to consolidate his autonomy. In seraphic life, with regard to his spiritual father, a person strives to consolidate his spiritual attraction to the “spiritual sun” of the father-seraph.

With regard to one’s seraph, it is possible to speak about the seraphic father or the seraphic fourth person – the person of the father.

Mankind is made up of two kinds (generations) of people. The first have seraphic fathers; the second do not. It is impossible to trigger the seraphic (personal spiritual) life of those who cannot lead it. They do not have different souls, but they simply live differently.

The seraphic person triggers the personal spiritual growth of the soul. Without a seraphic father, a person cannot become a pioneer in his acts of truthfulness, sincerity, and conscience. He experiences no need of moral improvement (in contrast to the improvement of his body, physique, psyche, and creative abilities). The very thought of moral improvement is unpleasant to such a person.

Without a seraphic father, a person can be smart, refined and even talented yet has nothing to say of his own. He does not have a hook by which a higher consciousness can lift him up. He is spiritually ungraspable.

Without the penetrative force of the seraphic father, you cannot tell yourself the truth about yourself.

People with a seraphic father – people of seraphic life – strive to absorb the stream of a higher consciousness of life. The age-old question of whether art can change people has the following answer: it can change people of seraphic life and of the seraphic father.

The inner world of people with a seraphic father can be compared to a flammable liquid, while the inner world of people without a seraphic father resembles water. A flame makes the former light up and burn brightly. The latter seethe and boil when heated yet also extinguish the fire that tries to kindle them.

Although a person without a seraphic father may be good, honest, kind and intelligent, he lacks higher intuitions, especially the mind’s intuition for deep thought, the mystic intuition and the intuition of “one’s own” – one’s own image of spirituality, one’s own world view, one’s own spiritual service, one’s own truth, one’s other Self, one’s own Collective Soul, and one’s own Path of Life.

Personal spiritual (seraphic) life is lead not by a person alone but by the person-and-seraph. The seraph enters into human life, and the depth of his penetration changes in the course of a person’s Path of Ascent.

4 (18).

All religious and moral doctrines take a certain higher state of the soul as a model and teach people how to attain it. This may be a certain state of sanctity, righteousness, enlightenment, faith, obedience, and so on. The merit of a person within a religious community, i.e., within a collective spiritual framework, is determined by the stage that he has reached on the path to the chosen state of perfection. The higher the level, the worthier the person. However, this is not the case in the doctrine of personal spiritual life.

“According to this doctrine,” writes Tolstoy, “no state can be higher or lower than another. According to this doctrine, every state is only one and, in itself, unimportant step on the path to unattainable perfection and thus is not a higher or lower stage of life. According to this doctrine, the augmentation of life is only the acceleration of movement towards perfection... For this reason, this

doctrine has no rules that must be observed. When a person at a lower stage moves towards perfection, he begins to live more morally, becomes better and better fulfils the doctrine than a person who is at a much higher stage of morality yet does not moves towards perfection.”⁴

It goes without saying that no collective spiritual life can be built on such foundations.

“According to this doctrine, the greater or lesser well-being of man depends not on the stage of perfection that he attains but on the greater or lesser acceleration of his movement,”⁵ i.e., on the acceleration of spiritual growth. In personal spiritual life, the most important thing is the speed of spiritual growth that strives not for something “big” or any other static state but for something “ever bigger” or the acceleration of motion, for only the acceleration of spiritual growth gives a person the “augmentation of life.”

Dynamic spiritual processes are important both for collective and personal spiritual life. However, in personal spiritual life, only they count.

Seraphic (personal spiritual) life is the process of ever greater vitality and spiritual growth – the ever greater manifestation of one’s own truth, one’s own conscience and spiritual Sincerity. If this process is lacking, seraphic life is also absent.

From the tactical standpoint, personal spiritual growth can be directed at the ideal state of unattainable perfection that is set down by the commandments of the Sermon of the Mount, say. However, setting such a target does not, in itself, assure incessant acceleration of spiritual growth and inner self-perfection. The principle of the acceleration of spiritual growth (which accords the greatest plenitude of life) can be realized if a person at all stages of life strives not towards the absolute summit of seraphic life but to a particular critical point, after which he enters a new and qualitatively different stage of seraphic life where spiritual growth acquires new content and direction. Only this is capable of assuring the process of the constant and greatest possible acceleration of spiritual growth.

Seraphic life is a sort of ascent. The further a person ascends, the more seraphic life renews his entire inner life and gives it a new and higher quality.

There are different periods and stages of seraphic life. Each age of seraphic life is preceded and followed by critical points that can be considered both as the conclusion of intrauterine development and as the manifestation of what had been given and the transfiguration of what had existed, i.e., as moments of birth. Seraphic life is a consecutive series of births. This series constitutes the ascending Path of personal spiritual life. The most immediate meaning of personal spiritual life lies in implementing one’s own path. The entire Path of Ascent leads from birth to birth and through births. On this Path, something may fall by the wayside, yet nothing dies: everything keeps reviving. In other words, what takes place is the opposite of death.

Everyone experiences spurts of growth and various upheavals and transformations in life. However, these spurts do not lie on the Path, if they do not lead a person to expand and deepen himself or to rise to the next point on the Path. The Path of seraphic life is a Path of Ascent for the simple reason that each stage of spiritual development on the Path contains an ascending movement towards the next birth on the Path, the next Path stage and the spiritual growth that corresponds to it.

Seraphic life is based on spiritual growth. Each period of seraphic life is marked by its own spiritual growth (or type of growth). This growth leads to the next spurt of life on the Path towards a new level of vitality and reason and a new trajectory of motion on the Path, i.e., to the next birth on the Path.

⁴ Leo Tolstoy, *Collected Works in 90 volumes* (in Russian), vol. 28, Moscow, 1935, p. 79.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

As such, the idea of spiritual ascent through a given series of path points will evoke objections only among people that reject the very notion of the Path. Others may only be troubled by the thought of the existence of a normative schedule on the Path of Ascent.

Human life is marked by different possibilities, impossibilities and limits. There is a standard span of human corporal life. If we assume that this span is not the result of chance but is set down from above with a view to allowing one to attain the highest possible and most appropriate result of path ascent during his allocated lifetime, then this alone implies the necessity of making an optimal Path schedule according to the ages of human life.

For a person to traverse the Path during a single lifetime, he must not only move incessantly, constantly accelerating his spiritual growth, but also manage to reach the end of the Path within the lifespan that is biologically accorded to him. To this end, his spiritual life must be as energetic as possible, and the Path itself greatly compressed and defined ahead of time, i.e., marked out with milestones according to age stages and periods. Lingering too long on one of the sections of the Path threatens to disrupt the Path ascent.

Although each person with a seraphic father has his own itinerary fate, there is a unique proper Path of Ascent for all people of seraphic life. Otherwise, a person's lifetime would be too short to traverse the Path to the end.

Sometimes (though not in every century) there appear giddy phenomena of spiritual life that do not follow the schedule of the Path. The Path of Ascent does not lead to them, however.

The graph of Path ascent leads to the hypothetical spiritual summit of a person's entire life. It does not lead there in any old way but follows the narrative of the Path that has special meaning. The Path is a narrative rather than simply a traversal of Path points. Without a Path narrative, Path points become unimportant and can be bypassed, destroying the very idea of the Path.

The Path narrative is given to a person from above. However, it is not God that sets down and marks out the Path of Ascent. The plan of the graph of Path ascent – its stages, milestones, turns and acclivities – gradually and invisibly takes shape in mankind itself. Yesterday, it still lacked something that it has today or will have tomorrow. However, when something appears, it stays for good.

The individual graph of Path traversal of the personal spiritual life of each person is based on the normative Path that exists at a given moment of development of mankind. In this sense, the normative Path is a fixed Path that must be traversed. It must be ascended from one age to another by every itinerant person, i.e., any person that is capable of traversing the Path and has a seraphic father.

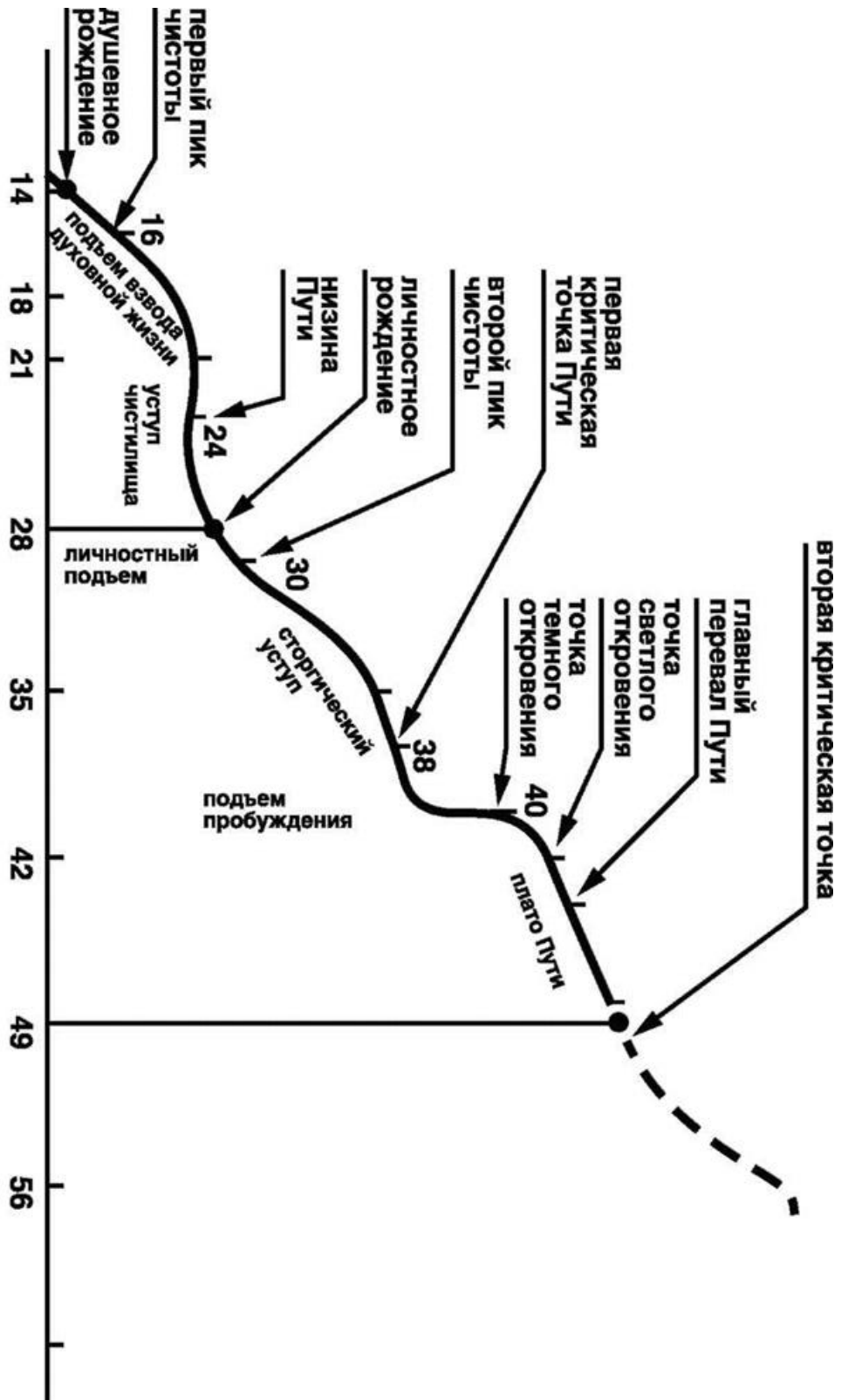


Рис. 3.

Вторая критическая точка = Second Critical Point
 Главный перевал пути = Main Path Col
 Точка светлого откровения = Point of Bright Revelation
 Точка темного откровения = Point of Dark Revelation
 Первая критическая точка Пути = First Critical Point on the Path
 Второй пик чистоты = Second Summit of Purity
 Личностное рождение = Personality Birth
 Низина Пути = Lowest Path Point
 Первый пик чистоты = First Summit of Purity
 Душевное рождение = Inner Birth
 Подъем взвода духовной жизни = Acclivity of the Triggering of Spiritual Life
 Уступ чистилища = Ledge of Purgatory
 Личностный подъем = Personality Acclivity
 Сторгический уступ = Storgic Ledge
 Подъем пробуждения = Acclivity of Awakening
 Плато Пути = Plateau of the Path

The human life-consciousness takes a special attitude towards old age as the result and evaluation criterion of one's entire life. Why not enjoy life, even if you had to spend your last years in misery? However, something in us protests against such an approach. Something tells people that their last years may well be more important than all the rest. These years incorporate childhood, youth and maturity; they present simultaneously all the years of one's life and show them all in a holistic picture that manifests itself in the soul of a person parting with life. If a person was good at 20, good at 35 yet bad at 60, his entire life went down the drain. It is as if he had never been good. Apparently somewhere between the ages of 35 and 60, he was too sluggish or simply incapable of reaching the next stage of the Path of Life. Nor did he manage to stay at the stage of spirituality that he had attained. He began to descend as a result.

Life as we know it is not itinerant or Path-centered. It lies on the wayside of the Path rather than on the Path itself. In this sense, the Path is not reality. Thus it is impossible to study the Path by studying real life. For the overwhelming majority of people, the Path of Ascent is a dream or fantasy of sorts – in any case, something that has no practical relation to life and takes no interest in the latter. Worldly wisdom (even at its best) has no need for the doctrine of the Path of Ascent. It makes use of what lies on the wayside of this doctrine and needs nothing more. The practical value of the central thought of the doctrine of the Path is lost for it. This occurs not because this thought is too lofty and inaccessible to worldly wisdom but because it takes a different basic attitude towards human life.

All the principles and recommendations of the doctrine of the Path of Ascent are meaningful only for a person that has at least passed through its initial stages and is capable of continuing the ascent. Such people are few in any place and at any time. Others will hardly take an interest in the doctrine of the Path. Even the itinerant person is never flattered by the doctrine of the Path in view of its elitist nature. Every one of us sooner or later comes off the Path or stops ascending on it. Thus the

doctrine of the Path can be edifying in one way or another but never popular. It inevitably condemns everyone. Who is willing to listen to and accept such a sentence?

5 (19).

The Path of Ascent is an axis along which the whole of human life from birth to death is arranged. A person on the Path does not live from one moment to the next but from one Path stage to another. He is aware of the Path within himself and increasingly assumes mystical responsibility for his entire life.

The Path of Ascent introduces a special scale of values for the human personality that distinguishes people on the basis of the stage of personal spiritual life that they have attained on the Path.

The knowledge of the Path of Ascent is essential to a person leading a personal spiritual life just as the knowledge of the number system is essential for understanding the world of numbers and mathematical notions. Every point of the Path is an indicator of what can and should be attained at any given age; it determines the normative state of personal spiritual life during a given period and sets a direction for further spiritual development. Taking the Path as a guide, one gets a better sense of direction in his spiritual life and in all the other movements of his inner world. Theoretically speaking, everyone can compare himself with the proper place corresponding to his age on the ascent graph. Yet, truth be told, this can usually be done only in hindsight.

One of the conventions of the graph of the Path of Ascent is its chronological division into seven-year (or, more precisely, fourteen-year) periods. If we plotted the ascent graph on an axis showing the changing individual corporal time in which a person lives in his unique real life, the graph of the Path would look different.

The graph of the ascent of personal spiritual life shows changes in the acceleration of spiritual growth during a person's lifetime. This is why it goes upwards almost everywhere.

The ascent graph consists of acclivities and ledges on the Path. In a period of afflux (accelerating growth), the graph is convex, becomes increasingly steep and approaches the vertical. In a period of reflux, it is concave, becomes increasingly flat and approaches the horizontal.

The spiritual growth of a person on the Path lasts all life long. However, the acceleration of spiritual growth increases on the acclivities of the Path and stays the same or falls on the ledges. A person lives more fully on acclivities than on ledges, becoming ever more "alive" and increasingly augmenting and intensifying the spiritual life within himself.

A person must constantly follow the Path – during periods of both afflux and reflux. However, he tends to go upwards during periods of afflux and to preserve himself during periods of reflux.

Each ledge and each acclivity on the graph of the Path corresponds to a particular plenitude of spiritual life and a particular state of personal spiritual life.

The graph of the Path goes in waves. Each afflux on the Path (acclivity) gives way to a reflux (ledge). A person can go to the side or fall off from any of the acclivities and ledges, stopping his ascent. There are numerous roads leading off the Path as well as numerous inner states that correspond to them. Nevertheless, there are only seven possible states on the Path itself – on the four acclivities and the three ledges.

On the wave of inner birth, the itinerant person experiences the state of the acclivity of the triggering of spiritual life (13-17 years old), at the start of which the inner birth takes place (14 years old), and the state of the ledge of "foreign life" or the ledge of "purgatory" (17-26 years old).

The wave of personality birth includes the state of the personality acclivity (26-31) and the state of the ledge of "one's own life" (31-37).

On the wave of the Awakening, one first passes through the great acclivity of the Awakening (38-42) that brings the soul through the points of dark and bright revelations to the ledge of the plateau of the Path (42-48).

The Path of Ascent contains the mysterious Critical Points of life. They include the Zero Critical Point from two-and-a-half to three years of age, the First Critical Point at the age of 36-37 and the Second Critical Point at the age of 50.

We should also mention the point of the eighteenth birthday (which may well become a Critical Point), during which a ban is put on ascending to the personality birth.

One cannot expect too much from a line drawn on paper. It is merely a breathing chart of the ascent of the Path that shows its affluxes and refluxes. Everyone leading a personal spiritual life has his own rhythm of respiration of the soul and his unique graph of Path ascent. If we take a close look at people's lives (on a day-to-day or even year-to-year basis), the similarity between a day or a year in the life of two different people is not always evident. However, in a larger perspective (say, a decade), one finds more similarities in the Path graphs. Everyone has his own biography and his own depth of respiration, which changes his graph of the Path of Ascent yet not its overall appearance.

At the point of inner birth, the line of the Path rises steeply before attaining its greatest speed at the first summit of purity. Spiritual reflux begins at the age of 16. This is the deepest and longest reflux on the Path of Ascent. In it, the triggering of personal spiritual life ends, and the purgatory of the Path of Life begins.

At the age of 22, spiritual growth ceases altogether, and the line of ascent becomes horizontal for the first and only time. At the lowest point of the Path, the process of the negative acceleration of growth may be more or less active. Here, at the lowest point of the Path of Ascent, the soul is put to the most difficult itinerant test. Most of those who enter this Path declivity fail to come out of it.

Immediately after the lowest point of the concavity of life at the age of 25 or so, spiritual growth resumes. It is slow at first and then accelerates so rapidly that the human soul marks its personality birth at the age of 28 on a steep acclivity. This afflux continues during the first half of the period of "one's own life." The slope of the ascent graph tends to decline between 30 and 32 years of age. The soul reaches the First Critical Point of life (36-37 years old) in a state of reflux. The speed of growth on the refluxes of the Path is fairly high: the Path-guiding forces do not want to destroy us.

The middle of life – the region of the graph around the First Critical Point of the Path – recalls in its flow the quiet period of the plateau of the Path. There are no other such sections on the ascent graph. They form two ledges of sorts between which the sheer wall of the Awakening lies. Pleasant and peaceful, both ledges tempt one to stay there. If we consider the concavity of the Path to be the first ledge, then the ascent graph has three ledges or steps separated by steep acclivities. One easily sees this three-step profile of the Path on the graph before the Second Critical Point.

Before the Second Critical Point, a person is either living on the first, second or third ledge of the Path or ascending from one ledge to another.

The work on shifting the Path from the second ledge to the third should be resolved at the First Critical Point and begun at the age of 38 or so.

By the age of 40-45, a man suddenly realizes that his life has begun to descend. In the doctrine of the Path, we call this point the main col of life. Now a man begins to feel himself to be mortal and transient for the first time. On the main col, something clicks in the soul, switching the life consciousness from “going into life” to “descending from life.” Until this time, falling and rising, he kept going into life. From this moment on, he begins to descend from life physically as well as inwardly.

The afflux of the Awakening is very steep and attains its peak at the age of 40 at the point of the dark revelation of life. At this point, we raise the line of the Path vertically and bend it towards the plateau of the Path, where growth continues at a constant rate. There is no afflux or reflux here, and thus the plateau is represented by a straight slanted line with a constant slope. No matter how long this line is, it always comes to an end.

For many years, I tried in vain to understand the ascent trajectory after the Second Critical Point. Apparently, I failed not only on account of my poor vision but also because this part of the ascent graph does not exist yet: it has not emerged, formed, or been mapped out. We will continue the ascent graph of the Path of spiritual life with a dotted line.

Antagonism is essential for personal spiritual growth. “The light shines in the darkness.” There must be “darkness” on a person’s Path. One could say that the Path becomes covered with manure through which the sown seed grows. The work of the Path of Ascent involves first and foremost overcoming obstacles created by inner desires, enticements and temptations. A lot of baits and traps lie in wait for a person walking down the Path, while evil and hostile forces try to stop his ascent. So many new and diverse forces, obstacles and traps appear with each step that it is hard to imagine how anyone can stay on the Path for long.

The Path is covered with obstacles that hinder a person’s progress and ascent and that can take a lifetime to overcome. Overcoming an obstacle signifies the augmentation of the energy of spiritual growth and the maturation of something new and important in the soul.

Temptations, enticements, false notions of wellbeing, and inner and corporal desires obstruct a person’s access to the Path and hinder and stop his ascent yet also make him work more actively and, even more importantly, freely. For example, friction and gravitation are necessary for the work of takeoff and flight: without them, it would be easy to break away and take off, yet no work would be needed for it. Every obstacle on the Path corresponds to a force of spiritual growth that one exerts to overcome it.

For most of his time on the Path, a person finds himself in an inner pothole of some sort, either sitting in it or falling into it or getting out of it. As soon as he gets out of one pothole, he immediately falls into the next. He falls in and gets out, goes from one trap to another, gets out and falls back in, gets out again and climbs down or falls into the next. However, his goal is not to go from one inner pothole to the next. A person travels down the Path rather than performing feats. Each day in the life of an itinerant person is a series of ascents and descents, temptations and disillusionments. His entire spiritual biography is made up of such stumbling, falling, rising, winning and losing. These working operations take up every year of his and every period and stage of his ascent of the Path of Life.

We shall repeat over and over again that one does not walk down the Path but ascends it, overcoming obstacles. An itinerant person must do itinerant work – the work of fraying his way – rather than simply walking down the Path. The burdens on different parts of the Path may be easier or more difficult for different people. The itinerant person may easily pass through a section or even period of

the Path without encountering any serious obstacle at all. The Path is individual in the sense that everyone has his own itinerant life work cut out for him along with his own working section of the Path and his own pothole (or potholes) in which it is more comfortable, pleasant or practical for him to sit or from which it is particularly difficult for him to get out. In addition, everyone has his own special temptation that is cut out and particularly necessary for him. Thus the merit of personal spiritual life can be only evaluated on the basis of a holistic picture of the entire Path of Life. It should be kept in mind that overtaking or falling behind the normative Path schedule can be the result of specific particularities of one's itinerant fate rather than shortcomings of his spiritual work.

6 (20).

At each of the three Critical Points, the fate of the subsequent Path ascent is determined.

At the Zero Critical Point (at about three years of age), the main parameters of a person's launch into life are selected. It is as if someone took a look at the little person and here, at the Zero Critical Point (and not at conception or birth), determined his status and decided whether he is capable of ascending the Path.

Note that these decisions are not taken by people and are made early on – before the child is capable of receiving powerful spiritual influences from without and of falling under their power.

At the Zero Critical Point, the upper limit and highest possible level of a person's ascent, his ultimate capacities, and his greatest possible consciousness of life and its goodness – in a word, his personal spiritual level – are determined. A person will never surpass this level, and, anyway, the task of human life is not to jump over your own head but to realize yourself fully and reach the highest point that is accessible to you. This is a person's task in life, and it is not often implemented.

The inner birth is the birth of the soul into autonomous life. Only now does the soul begin to lead its own (i.e., seraphic) life. It is the inner birth that opens up the personal spiritual side of the inner world of man.

During inner birth, a youth acquires not only the awareness of his inner separatedness and particularity but experiences the need for the first time to look inside himself and follow his own inner voice.

In newly emerging personal spiritual life, not everything is determined and accessible to human understanding. The inner birth, which puts a person on the Path of Ascent, is mystical in the sense that, after it, one begins to make out his seraph in the distance.

The perspective of the Path opens up during the inner birth when one's seraph is only hinting that it will enter the higher soul, which, in turn, is getting ready to accommodate him. During the inner birth, the seraph announces himself to the higher soul from afar and beckons it. He is not visible himself. In the prologue to the Path of Ascent, a person sees a "phantom" of the seraph that he should subsequently accommodate, preserve and nurture.

The seraph gives the autonomously existing soul new properties and qualities. These include, first and foremost, the spiritual need for experiencing the Ideal and for being engrossed by it as well as the capacity for the intense creation of ideals in the soul. Acquiring insight, the soul sees with it the Ideal that serves as a measure of all that exists on Earth and that determines all the values and tasks of life. This includes both the capacity of spiritual growth and the need for it – i.e., the attainment of a greater plenitude of life of the higher soul. It also includes the alternating experience of the sacred and the vile, augmented by the sensation of inner nakedness, vulnerability and defenselessness. It

furthermore includes a new consciousness of inner freedom that does not yet know how to express itself in action and that seeks self-expression in independent inner activity and inner substance.

This is also a new spiritual need for Sincerity, which is not so much the quality of inner openness, frankness, straightforwardness or the lack of hypocrisy as the power of spiritual purity, which can overcome all possible hindrances to inner development, soothe spiritual suffering and make a person capable of surpassing himself when necessary.

Acquiring the autonomy of personal spiritual life, the soul acquires the freedom of mutual life with another higher soul. However, this freedom cannot, for the moment, be realized in what we call storgic love. The soul of a youth is not mature enough for storgic love. However, it cannot wait, either, and so begins to participate in the amorous passions of the philic soul. At this time, storgic freedom is realized in fully adult, strong (often lasting a lifetime) and responsible friendship that can occur alongside youthful love and is often higher than it.

During the inner birth and for some time after, Light emanates from the seraph (or, more precisely, from the place where the seraph is), directing a person's gaze to the highest and ultimate point of the Path of Ascent. The search for one's spiritual summit begins with the inner birth under the influence of the seraph's phantom. The seraph's phantom enables a person to get a presentiment and preview of the possibility of taking a look at his inner life from within – from a certain higher standpoint that is not accessible for the time being yet may eventually become so. The sources of many major thoughts and profound revelations of maturity lie here during the period of inner birth when they were still a pure vision of the phantom of the seraph.

During inner birth, a person acquires the intuition of what he should be. Although this intuition is weak for the time being, it already begins to exert an influence on the volitions of the soul. After the inner birth, an itinerant person knows that he has a highest point and that must search for it and find it. This requires spiritual growth and embarking upon and ascending the Path of Life. A young person that has undergone inner birth strives for self-development and for "making his own self."

During the period of inner birth, the seraph supports the autonomous existence of the highest soul. The seraph is already capable of guiding the soul (though not directly) on the Path of Ascent. This guidance takes the form of the itinerant intuition that warns one of the danger of leaving the Path. It is impossible to go high up on the Path without this intuition (and without the intuition of what one should be). The need that one experiences during this period of life for the spiritual force of Sincerity stems from the distant presence of the seraph and his demands on the soul.

The phantom of the seraph also contributes to the targeted triggering of the mechanism of spiritual life and sows something in a person that should subsequently grow into "one's own truth," "one's own spiritual life," and ultimately one's own special task at the highest stages of the Path of Life.

7 (21).

Every person that undergoes inner birth can make it up the acclivity of personality birth. The extent to which this occurs depends on what takes place during the fourteen-year period between inner birth and personality birth. During these years, a person must, first of all, trigger his spiritual life and, secondly, pass through the itinerant ordeals. Both are necessary to prove that he is capable of accommodating the seraph within him and to prepare for his arrival.

After the inner birth, the graph of ascent continues to go steeply upwards until the first summit of purity (at 16-17 years of age). A young man is given a period of two years or so to gather strength in

order to begin the work of triggering the mechanism of his spiritual life from the attained height. After the inner birth, spiritual purity provides the detonator and lifting power for subsequent ascent on the Path.

The graph of ascent on the declivity after the first summit of purity is shown schematically. There may be deep crevasses in any of its sections. However, the spiritual force gathered on the first summit of purity usually suffices for the next few years to lift a young man from the bottom of the deep abyss into which he sometimes falls. These may be the only years of their kind in a person's life.

The third period of the Path – the period of ideals – is the prologue to the Path of Life. Its inner content consists of dreams and future (though not present) actions. In the state of triggered spiritual life, the itinerant person continues to search for "his own Ideal" and, first and foremost, the Ideal of his own self or of his perfectly expressed self. Such creation of ideals is inspired by and founded on the spiritual intuition (suggested by the seraph's phantom) of one's proper and perfect self. However, such creation is short-lived: it appears and vanishes once again, as if it had gone around the corner or sunk below the horizon. The distant influence of the seraph on the personal spiritual life of the third seven-year period on the Path of Ascent is felt only at its beginning, where the mechanism of seraphic life is triggered and launched.

After the summit of purity is passed and especially during the period of purgatory, the phantom of the seraph grows dimmer. The spiritual sparks that had come out like fireworks just a short while earlier begin to die out by the age of 19-20, and the young man enters a different period, where it shall become clear whether he had been spiritually triggered to the required extent earlier, even if this mechanism was repeatedly foiled subsequently.

At the beginning of the fourth seven-year period of life, a man, despite his seeming self-confidence, is a being that is greatly confused and poorly controllable from within. His reason and wisdom have not yet emerged at this time, while his ideals have been extinguished. Willy-nilly, he looks at everything from the standpoint of other people.

During this period, his consciousness is easily inspired by "convictions," "theories" and "ideas" that replace the functions of seeing himself as he should be and of warning himself about his non-conformity to the Path. At the same time, a person is apt to frequently change ideological systems, albeit the latter often continue to influence him in accordance with the passing mental and emotional epidemics of the environment in which he lives. We call the fourth period of the Path the period of "foreign life."

During the period of "foreign life," the itinerant person is principally unable to find "his own" people and things. He rushes about, rejecting different movements that inspire him one after the other. As a result of the efforts of the period of "foreign life," every innerly born person can either find the right direction for his personality birth or squander his entire supply of spiritual energy in the chaos of everyday life, finding a calm place in life for himself and letting it go at that.

Innerly born people have to make their way through the rubble of purgatory, which seems to have been piled up on purpose. Most of them get stuck there.

During the fourth seven-year period of the Path, the itinerant person undergoes path tests of the true value and strength of his itinerant forces and possibilities. As a result of such tests, only what the higher soul truly has and what it can truly do remain in personal spiritual and seraphic life. The rest must disappear to the necessary extent over time.

The transition period of "foreign life" is also necessary for a person to purge himself. This is the period of purgatory. During this period, a person is tossed around by the waves: the waves of different desires and temptations keep running over him in an unsystematic and disorderly fashion. The

spiritually triggered person is purged in the fire of pathlessness on the way to his personality birth. Everything that does not function properly should be taken out of service without delay. Every new thing that is introduced should be first subjected to a road test in unfavorable conditions.

Every person has a key and special temptation in life. In the strategic aims of Path ascent, this key obstacle and temptation should be removed at the very beginning during the road tests of purgatory. The main obstacle on the Path is not a bad personality trait or something that is poorly sown, defective or ancestral, obstructing the ascent. Rather it is a core temptation that, from the standpoint of, say, personal or public good, may not be particularly harmful or evil but is nevertheless a decisive and insurmountable barrier on one's personal Path of Ascent. A person striving to live a seraphic life must identify his core temptation early on and either eliminate it completely or at least sap its strength sufficiently to prevent it from controlling him.

The entry to purgatory is always a collapse, whether gradually as in a landslide or suddenly at a single go. The collapse at the beginning of the fourth seven-year period of the Path leads to the lowest point of the Path of Life that is situated at the age of 23-25 years on the ascent graph. This lowland of life is not a monstrosity but the apex of selfish autonomous movement in the itinerant traversal of life.

The acclivity of personality birth begins from the lowest point of the Path.

8 (22).

The phantom of one's seraph appears from the post-human world during inner birth. The spiritual life of man is launched from this world during inner birth. During personality birth, the seraph enters the person from the same world, and the entire personal spiritual life is now supported by his presence in the soul.

On the acclivity of personality birth, a person becomes increasingly aware of what is foreign to him in all that he had absorbed during the years of purgatory. He recognizes the "foreign" not by its intrinsic essence but in its impropriety to himself. The period of "foreign life" passes, and the period of "his own life" begins, where he has to decide what is his and what is not his or not appropriate to him. These are the years of shifting life stances when a lot of things collapse, change or are created anew. The itinerant person senses the necessity of becoming himself and looks for his own development trajectory of inner life that would be proper to him alone.

On the ledge of purgatory, the itinerant person mistakes the "foreign" for "his own." He searches for "his own interest" and tries to go by this interest in life. However, he does not know what it means to live his own inner life, to build "his own world" and, even less, to live in it and go by "his own truth" – to acquire and guard the consciousness of his own spirituality.

Only with such a consciousness does a person become capable of recognizing a kindred style of spirituality in the souls of other people. People that have undergone personality birth are rare and, for this reason, often solitary. In his spiritual solitude, a person that has undergone personality birth looks for people with the same style of spirituality, wants to communicate with them, and finds (or, more precisely, divines) them: they are most often people that have died long ago or live far away and about whom one reads in books. This keen consciousness of spiritual kinship in inner life is the primary and most reliable indicator that personality birth has taken place.

The person that has undergone personality birth is a responsible person. Personality birth always presupposes service. For such a person, "his own life" means, first and foremost, "his own service" – not on account of some idea or the call of time but of what he has found within himself and of

the profound inner need that he has recognized. Ideal service is another important indicator that personality birth has taken place.

After personality birth, one begins to hear an inner voice that warns him about the vanity of life. This voice must be gratified to make it less painful. It can be drowned out by intense and successful activity, career-making, the accumulation of wealth, the simple excitement of life or the struggle for freedom, fairness, environmental protection and so on and so forth.

Personality birth is accompanied by the conscious or unconscious fear of leading an empty or worthless life. One of the main life motives after personality birth is not to live meaninglessly, fruitlessly or in vain.

During the period of "one's own life," the two different aspects of the inner world come into equilibrium. At this stage of the Path of Life, personal spiritual life and collective spiritual life do not exclude one another and, indeed, are often in harmony. A certain collective spiritual life may be very congenial and precious to a person that stands on the Path of Ascent in his personal spiritual life. However, it sometimes occurs that a higher soul that has been weakened and devastated in purgatory is unable to make it to the top of the acclivity of personality birth on which it embarks and becomes immersed in a passing current of collective spiritual life, on which it ascends the acclivity of personality birth.

Soon after personality birth, one enters a phase of equilibrium and reconciliation that is particularly necessary for storge. Storge is the striving to intertwine one's soul with the soul of another person so that the latter ceases to be "another person" or "another Self" and becomes "one's other Self" with whom one lives as a single whole. Storgic love means to make yourself the other person and to make the other person yourself – to turn "one's Self" and the "other Self" into two aspects of a single being. The simplest illustration of storge is the myth about the existence of two souls as halves that are sent into the world in order to unite in love.

During the period of "his own life," a person adjoins everything to himself. Everything in his inner world is balanced for storgic affairs. The person that has undergone personality birth feels the irresistible desire to continue his inner life together with another person – in storge with his other Self. One's deep personal world is created on the waves of storgic realization. It is difficult to continue on the Path of Ascent without creating storgic relations and intertwinements.

Personality birth on the Path is followed by the acclivity of the second summit of purity. Here the Light of the Consciousness of Ideals is kindled once again. This light sometimes burns brighter at the age of thirty during the second summit of purity than it did during the first summit of purity in one's youth. All the spiritual forces of Sincerity, Truthfulness and Ideals that a person felt in himself during the acclivity of the triggering of spiritual life reappear in him on the personality acclivity. The second summit of purity is not so much for triggering or winding up personal spiritual life as for storgic affairs.

To lead one's own inner and spiritual life means to live in accordance with one's spirituality and to lead one's special storgic life. This includes one's special moral principles, one's experience of good, the sensitivity to one's own conscience (and not to a conscience borrowed from others), and a particular compassion for certain types of misfortunes of others. This also includes one's own choice of activity of the heart corresponding to one's personality, one's own task in storgic relations and, finally, one's own storgic love that is directed towards the person that the soul waits for and that it senses ahead of time intertwined with itself.

Love on the acclivity of personality birth – the love of personality birth – is a unique state of life in which the storgic relationship is implemented on its own and where the person does not have to make any efforts. It suffices to recognize "one's other Self" and not be mistaken.

“One’s own life” is the identification and augmentation of the characteristic traits of one’s style of spirituality and one’s intuition for the kindred conjugate soul that is needed to create a new mutual spirituality. Indeed, a key goal of “one’s own life” is to implement storgic life.

A person never forms a monolithic whole better than during the period of “his own life” on the storgic ledge of the Path graph. A spiritual personality conscious of its own self builds itself a fortified abode that it must still make its own – and do it together in a storgic relationship with its “other Self.”

The storgic period on the Path lasts for only 8-10 years from 27/28 to 38/39 years of age. The time of “one’s own life” before the First Critical Point is optimal for storgic affairs. Storge is apparently very important for taking the decision at the First Critical Point. Storgic failure or non-realization is one of the main reasons for coming off the Path at the First Critical Point. This does not exclude further ascent on the Path. However, it will be a solitary Path of Ascent that cannot always be traversed by the soul on account of its insufficient qualities.

9 (23).

At the First Critical Point (36/37 years old), one takes note of what has been attained and gets permission to embark upon the next stage of seraphic life. The majority of people that have undergone “personality birth” do not get such permission: upon completing “their own life” they take the road of spiritual quiescence followed by an outbreak of passions between the ages of 40 and 50 and then slow or rapid decline.

The question of who takes decisions here (and how and why) is discussed in our big book. It suffices to say that external life circumstances play virtually no role during the traversal of the First Critical Point.

At both the First and the Second Critical Points, a person begins to think about what meaning he will subsequently give to his life. At the Second Critical Point, he thinks about the meaning that he will give to the remainder of his life, making the ultimate choice of his life’s meaning. At the First Critical Point, he thinks about the meaning of his subsequent life. Here, too, the replacement of one meaning (that preceded the First Critical Point) by another serves as evidence of the traversal of the First Critical Point only if the first meaning is abandoned on account of its insufficient spirituality rather than its mere superfluity.

If a person traverses the First Critical Point, his inner life begins to develop faster and faster, foreshadowing the Awakening.

The fifth seven-year period of life is not a period when the seraph takes active control of human life. He continues to stay behind the scenes, being present (and indicating his presence) yet not working.

After personality birth, a person gets the opportunity for the first time to go down the Path in the presence of the seraph yet does not know the latter or its needs for the time being. This non-manifest (or even “secret”) presence of the seraph can be detected either from its mediated impact on the work of the inner world or in hindsight when its work becomes sufficiently manifest.

The seraph after personality birth is not yet a creator but a censor that, at best, corrects inner work so as to prevent one from straying. Such partial manifestation of one’s own seraph suffices for the needs of the fifth seven-year period of the Path of Ascent. At this time, the seraph has not yet ultimately decided to enter the human soul yet is already willing to participate in its life. The question of whether he will participate or not is decided at the First Critical Point, whose successful traversal leads to the presence and working participation of a person’s own seraph in his life.

People of seraphic life or itinerant people are the gold reserves of mankind. However, these reserves are not used very effectively. If many of those who were allotted inner birth subsequently went through personality birth and the First Critical Point, this alone would considerably change the whole moral and spiritual climate of human life on Earth.

Just as human life grows out of and is based on organic and animal life, so innerly born people grow out of the mass of innerly unborn and one-stage people. This mass inevitably surrounds a person ascending the Path, who must survive in this environment not only spiritually but also physically. It is no surprise that the majority of innerly born people come off the Path soon after inner birth. Nevertheless, they have a different state of life than one-stage people. Their souls have been initiated into autonomous life and summoned to lead a personal spiritual life yet have not been sufficiently triggered for it and slumber in a semi-conscious state.

The life of a one-stage person is shaped by his psycho-physiological character and the collective inner and outer circumstances in which he finds himself. His flesh traces out the temporal axis of the ascent graph, yet spiritual ascent is absent.

Despite all the differences of characters and destinies, the one-stage person remains in his own unchanging spiritual state to the end of his life. It is the state of life consciousness of an innerly unborn person that has not become acquainted with his seraphic father and the seraphic life of the soul.

Seeing immorality, the one-stage person reacts with indignation yet without the heartfelt pain of the free moral sense. Nor does he take a real interest in Truth. A new truth does not stagger his soul, move it, or leave a mark on it. By himself he cannot recognize what is true, distinguish between truth and falsehood, single out what is important among a mass of secondary details or pose profound questions to himself, not to speak of finding answers to them. He is an unusual character controlled by the Collective Soul. He has a special style of spirituality, yet this style is not his own but stems from the Collective Soul or some other unity of which he is part. The Collective Soul is the refuge of all one-stage people.

The innerly unborn person may be talented or even gifted. He may have a wonderful memory, extensive knowledge, a thirst for learning, a keen mind, a wide intellectual horizon, and a wealth of ideas, most of which are not his own. All that he learns and knows, all that he thinks about, and his entire panorama and direction of thought is determined by the Collective Soul or the cultural needs of the time or arises at the demand or in the interests of other people. Despite his notable innate mental capacity, it makes no difference to his soul what to think about and where to direct its mental gaze.

Seraphic life is elitist from the very beginning of the Path. An abyss lies between an innerly born person and an innerly unborn person. The latter remains a one-stage person for his entire life, while the former, no matter what befalls him subsequently on the Path, enters a new stage of personal spiritual life and becomes a two-stage person, whom he remains to the end of his days.

For a person that has undergone personality birth and continues on the Path of Ascent, the striving for peace of mind is tantamount to suicide. If there are no prospects of further ascent on the Path, the person after passing the First Critical Point enters the state of a stably growing two-stage person and continues to lead such a life until his death. He does not transform himself qualitatively anymore but only keeps repeating himself ever more subtly and adroitly. This is a dead end.

A person always enters the personality dead-end alley with great enthusiasm, luxuriously blooms like a barren flower, and entrains others after him. Many people choose to emulate the

personalities of colorful people going down dead-end alleys and blooming in a fashion that particularly suits their milieu or age. In every generation, luxuriously blooming individuals come to the foreground, fighting between themselves and attracting crowds of imitators that identify with them and adopt their style of feeling and self-expression. They shape public life, set the overall tone, and define the direction of inner development of a generation.

Some two-stage people do not acquire a personality, do not undergo Path trials, and do not attain personality birth. Other two-stage people undergo personality birth. Only the latter are capable of full-fledged creative work, including art.

At the age of 60 or so, two-stage people become the leaders of society. People usually take an interest in what they do and say. In the decades remaining after the First Critical Point, the two-stage person is successful and therefore sincerely believes that he has attained the summit of life and, in particular, spiritual life. Two-stage people become outstanding professionals in science, art or politics earlier than one-stage people. Over the years, they become leaders in their chosen fields of activity. They make discoveries in their respective fields and determine the development of society wholly or in part. However, they are unfamiliar with revelations about life and do not believe in them. Their spiritual life changes little with time. From the spiritual standpoint, two-stage people do not surpass the age of 25 or, at most, 35. The mark of this age always remains on them.

The second stage of the Path ends at the First Critical Point.

Those who do not pass the First Critical Point lose the life inspiration with which they lived after inner and personality birth. People that pass the First Critical Point never lose the inspiration of life in itself.

The First Critical Point can be followed by stabilization in the autonomous traversal of two-stage life and by the tranquillization of inner life without any subsequent Path activities or trials.

Alternatively, the person can enter the third stage of the Path and become a three-stage person.

One should distinguish between three-stage people traversing the second stage of the Path of Ascent and two-stage people for whom nothing is decided at the First Critical Point (and could not possibly be decided).

The two-stage man that enters the fifth decade of life is caught in a mental tornado that is comparable in its spiritual destructiveness to the hurricane of purgatory. For the three-stage man, this is the favorable time of the plateau of the Path – a period of peaceful earthly life and personal efflorescence.

10 (24).

The constant and continuous acceleration of spiritual growth is a measure of the quality of seraphic life and its principal itinerant principle. The height attained by a person during all of his preceding life is not so important here; it is more important to see that growth continues and from what state of life it continues.

To determine the spiritual merit of a person, one must see what stage of the Path he is on, whether this stage corresponds to his age, and whether he is behind or on the normative Path schedule. Just as important are his further prospects of life on the Path, which are determined by the parameters of his personal spiritual growth towards the next birth on the Path. How productive is his progress with regard to the Path? This is undoubtedly decided by the acceleration of spiritual growth that determines the plenitude of a person's spiritual life at any given moment. If a reflux occurs on the Path at some

point, the speed of spiritual growth becomes smaller here than on an acclivity and its acceleration is also smaller. When the reflux gives way to an afflux on the Path, we see a different picture in which the acceleration of spiritual growth becomes greater. Spiritual growth with its characteristic speed and acceleration has its own strategic and tactical aim at each point of the Path. At one point, acceleration must be sufficient to pass through Path birth; at another point, it must assure further ascent after the summit of purity; at a third, it aims to preserve what has been acquired and attained on the preceding acclivity or to pass through Path trials; and, at a fourth, it is directed at staying on the Path at all costs.

Spiritual growth should accelerate at all moments of seraphic life. However, how it accelerates and with what aims and at what rate depends on the Path moment.

Every Path birth can be delayed. However, critical points arrive at the appointed time, and the decisions taken there cannot be revoked. If a person does not enter the third stage of life in the year of the First Critical Point, he will never become a three-stage person. If a person does not change his trajectory at the age of 50 at the Second Critical Point, he will remain a three-stage person to the end of his life.

The time interval between the Zero Critical Point (at the age of three) and inner birth amounts to 11 years (and what critical years they are!). This period is subject to all kinds of accidents that can foil inner birth. Only a few years separate the First Critical Point and the Awakening, and something catastrophic for the Path can hardly take place in the inner world during this period. Who successfully passes the First Critical Point shall, without a doubt, attain the acclivity of the Awakening.

In one-stage and two-stage Path traversal, a crisis takes place at the age of 40, while a person on the Path of Ascent reaches the acclivity of the Awakening during the same time. This is one of the supreme acclivities of all human life and determines it to a great extent.

The acclivity of the Awakening is the steepest part of the Path on which one experiences the greatest acceleration of spiritual growth. This acceleration is necessary for a person to be able to ascend a high and sheer cliff, take a look around him and at himself, and try to understand what has happened and is happening to him: where has he ended up in life and how is he living? This is a time of insights and profound thoughts that determine the person's subsequent inner and spiritual life. For the first time, a person truly understands the vanity of his life and the lives of other people.

At the First Critical Point, among the many ends sticking out of the ball of life threads and themes of a person's further spiritual development, he easily finds the end of a small thread that he must pull in order to fulfill his future predestination. On the acclivity of the Awakening, this thread is pulled out so far that it becomes a personal guiding thread and cannot be lost anymore in the ball of countless life themes.

The Awakening makes the impression of a personal revolution – a revolution of a person's entire being and an inner upheaval after which he can no longer be the same as before.

The acclivity of the Awakening is a shattering event through which a person acquires a spiritual personality. A person on the acclivity of the Awakening becomes sufficiently mature to pose profound questions to Life, people and God – questions that are posed earnestly rather than for the sake of curiosity or conversation and that are asked in the name of one's spiritual personality. He becomes mature enough for profound personal questions and personal spiritual experiences. And his questioning is not ignored.

One-stage people do not have an intuition for deep thought. This intuition grows as one ascends the Path. Although a two-stage person may be an outstanding scholar or artist or even a teacher of life for others, he is incapable of delving into real life issues or understanding them. This intuition fully works only in three-stage people.

If you are not a three-stage person, you will never be able to say what is wise and what is shallow. Only the third stage of the Path gives wise men to mankind.

The two-stage person can only repeat what he has heard, even if he expounds it in a new way. In contrast, three-stage people can say something new to people.

People do not get the capacity of insight before the acclivity of the Awakening. Insight is not a gift but a property of three-stage life. In itself, Awakening is the opening of one's eyes or insight. From this moment on, the capacity of insight may become increasingly manifest.

When a question is posed on the plateau of the Path, there is always an answer. This answer is not always perfect or definitive or expresses the universal Truth or even has the same depth as the question. This answer can subsequently change, deepen, become more precise or even be annulled on several occasions. However, it does not remain in limbo. A question is posed, and an answer is given, and this answer lies on the way to a true answer to one's question and to one's own truth and thus to Truth as such.

A man of substance is not born. A person has to attain the age of substantiality. Before the age of 40 and the acclivity of the Awakening, one can guess yet not know for sure whether a person is substantial or not – even if he is extremely gifted and intelligent.

Human substance is a sign of the presence of the seraph in man. One-stage people are never substantial. Two-stage people can be substantial when they have the potential for further ascent. Three-stage individuals are men of substance.

A three-stage person has a special nerve for experiencing life. His soul trembles when he comes into contact with life. It is constantly in a working state and ready for shudders, revelations and insights – for everything that can move it. The mind and feelings of a three-stage person are always ready to delve into what moves and attracts them. The three-stage person is constantly in a state of total mobilization that only increases with each passing year.

A three-stage person is haunted by his seraph. The latter's presence is so apparent and substantial that the three-stage person is no longer the master of his spiritual life, despite the fact that he performs his spiritual labor himself. The spiritual growth of a three-stage person may sometimes slow down yet never stops altogether. If you are wise, you cannot become shallow or shallower. Although a three-stage person may fall off into a pit, he remains a three-stage person that cannot revert to a two-stage existence or burn out, contrary to what often happens to a two-stage person.

During Awakening, the personal seraph not only enters a person and "rooms in" into the soul but also immerses his mind in earthly life.

In the brightness of the revelation that proceeds from the seraph, the three-stage person sees the Darkness of life. The first working act of the personal seraph in man is this dark revelation on the acclivity of the Awakening.

With age, many people begin to perceive the dark side of human life, see life in its true colors and without illusions and ultimately become shrewd and resilient. During the Awakening, the three-stage person rises above ordinary human reason and feeling and sees what other people do not see and sense. The dark revelations of the three-stage person are mystical and tragic and address the mystery of Evil and its power in the human world. He sees the Darkness of life in a new way and searches for (and sometimes finds) his own view of Evil and his own personal theme of uncovering it. At this age, Dostoyevsky wrote *Crime and Punishment*, while Tolstoy realized the evil of subjection for the first time.

At the third stage, one feels the profound urge to live in the presence of the seraphic father within himself at each moment, to invoke him in himself, to listen to him and to gain insight with his

help. This broadens the horizon of man's vision, including his mystical horizon. This leads most often to a "bright revelation."

In the bright revelation, a person with his mystical presentiments penetrates into the depths of his soul for the first time and understands for the first time that someone truly exists in his depths – someone who is not his soul as such and in whom his soul can only participate. Before the bright revelation, this fact could only have been the object of contemplation, imagination or mystical intuition. Only now does this participation become apparent through revelation. As a result of such revelation, a person becomes aware of his responsibility to the being that lives in him. After the bright revelation, spiritual life becomes fraught with responsibility.

The three-stage person cannot help but feel that he is responsible. This is his torment and his preoccupation and drives his need for self-knowledge. He is a spiritually responsible person that knows that his soul must work and be vigilant. His soul is always experiencing pain, whether through reason or feeling or religious consciousness or the sense of responsibility to the lofty and personal being that lives within it.

The three-stage person is a generator of new ideas, revelations, and insights that have universal significance. However, people do not believe or treasure the three-stage person and are indifferent to the values of his life and soul. In contrast to the two-stage person, the three-stage person rarely appears in our life. You cannot make out three-stage people in today's overcrowded, hectic and disassociated world. You can live your life without ever meeting a three-stage person. To tell the truth, only a three-stage person can identify a three-stage person in the crowd and understand him.

The anxieties on the acclivity of the Awakening are followed by a period of calm. Attaining the plateau of the Path at the age of 45, a three-stage person, despite his sense of responsibility, feels stable and content with what he is and what is within him. This is a wonderful time for creation! Those who experience it think that this steady, continual and profound flow of life will go on forever.

At this point, basking in the plenitude of his inner forces, a man unwittingly passes through what we have called the main col of human life. The tide of human life first swells, gaining in height and power, and then ebbs, breaks and flows back, leaving something behind. The heart of the matter lies in the "before" and the "after."

Before attaining the main col, a person kept going up into life without seeing death behind the mountains. Now he crosses the col and begins to descend the mountain, goes down from life and sees death before himself, becoming conscious of his real mortality, its lawful and directly apparent inevitability, and the finitude of his lifespan, whose end looms in the distance.

11 (25).

The entire Path is determined by three Critical Points. Their dates are rigidly fixed on the age axis of the ascent graph. They assure the regularity of all the other points on the Path.

At the age of fifty or so, most people decide once and for all how they will spend the rest of their lives. This is a person's own decision or his own evasion from making a decision. However, what is decided at the Second Critical Point is not an individual decision.

At the Second Critical Point, the final goal of the Path of Ascent is set, and the direction of the prescribed trajectory becomes manifest. This decision is taken at such a high level that a person cannot influence it in any way.

Anyone who fails to pass through the First Critical Point (which acts as a filter that either blocks or allows further progress on the Path) shall remain a two-stage person, although he could have become a three-stage person and continued on the Path. After passing the Second Critical Point, he may well remain a three-stage person. This is neither defeat nor departure from the Path but one of the possibilities of further spiritual development. He who passes through the Awakening remains an itinerant person to the end of his days.

At the Second Critical Point, it is not decided whether a person remains on the Path or leaves it. At the Second Critical Point, a task is given to (and not removed from) a person. The Second Critical Point is a crossroads at which the direction of subsequent spiritual development is prescribed rather than a departure from the Path or a defeat stemming from failures on it.

A three-stage person *per se* has an extremely rich ascending life with no age limits and with its own non-normative stages of ascent. The three-stage person can continue to live for decades after the Second Critical Point, developing in the same direction and gradually acquiring wisdom, maturity, insight and the knowledge of life and attaining his own summit of seraphic life through a steady and unremitting ascent. This is a legitimate and productive process of the ever greater manifestation of what already exists.

The First Critical Point brings the seraph into active work without determining where, why and with what purpose he shall move. At the Second Critical Point, a person undergoes a test of his readiness for the fourth stage of the Path and the new stretch of spiritual life that (in contrast to the normative stages of the Path) we shall call the free path of life.

The Second Critical Point on the ascent graph is noteworthy insofar as it divides the entire trajectory of personal spiritual ascent into a marked (normative) and an unmarked (free) part. Before the Second Critical Point, there are at least seven normative age points on the ascent curve. On the free section, there is not a single point of the kind. Indeed, the ascent graph ceases to exist as such.

The traversal of the Second Critical Point opens the possibility of entering the free path yet does not bring a person onto it. No matter what goals the free path shall have, they must be planned and prepared before the Second Critical Point. The fifty-year-long itinerant seraphic life is reviewed by someone, who then decides (on grounds that are not known in each individual case) whether the person shall follow a free life path or not.

The momentum of bright revelation should suffice not only for a full-fledged three-stage life but also for the launch onto the free path of life.

During the fifth decade of life, the itinerant man runs up against numerous temptations that he has not seen before and that can kill him. All the cataclysms stemming from the emerging consciousness of one's mortality must be overcome before one reaches the Second Critical Point so as not to threaten or disfigure subsequent seraphic life.

To enter the free path of life, a person must make his own sacrifice. He must make this sacrifice for the sake of sacrifice. Possible sacrifices include abandoning the fruit of one's creative work, giving up a late love for a young woman, leaving one's family, rejecting one's property, slipping into poverty and vagabondage, mortifying one's flesh, and other major ascetic efforts that are signs of the victory over one's own Self for the sake of what lies ahead.

After the personality birth, a person experiences the life successes that are his due on account of his destiny and talents. Continuing to develop himself and his talents, he makes a name for himself

and casts the foundations of his position in society, in his work, and in his professional and confessional community. People that have undergone personality birth and subsequently made it up the acclivity of the Awakening live an even fuller, more successful and happier life as personalities. During this period, the seraph enriches the person and his creative will with the depths of self-awareness and self-sensation.

Attaining the lofty heights of personal spiritual life after the Second Critical Point accords neither fame nor recognition. In contrast, it often evokes people's antagonism. People of the free path are rarely the spiritual (or cultural) leaders of society.

A seraph cannot control a person if the latter does not first perform an act of self-renunciation for the seraph's sake. To enter upon the highest levels of the Path, a person must have a certain level of self-renunciation – the renunciation of the very personality that had just manifested itself to others with such power and grandeur. The tumultuous personalization of the personality that begins after personality birth and all the creative results and achievements connected herewith firmly bind a person to the normative life path and do not let him enter the free path ahead. This is his personalistic obstacle on the Path.

The personalistic obstacle should be understood not in the sense that it is created by a personalistically rooted essence (personality) but in the sense that this obstacle should be overcome for the special personalization of the Personality on the free path of life. A person of the free path is mystically and innerly selfless, does not seek his own advantage, and does not beseech God to grant him any boon.

A man of the free path is not an incorporeal spirit. His flesh, the psychological attacks of other people, and all sorts of temptations provoke and carry him away. There are times when he lies to himself or falls under the spell of self-life that he had seemingly already overcome. When this takes place, the seraph punishes him – yet not in the same way as he had punished him before.

Whereas the seraph torments a two or three-stage person and puts pressure on his conscience, gives him the sensation that he has desecrated his own spiritual purity, haunts him with moral nightmares or summons him to self-sacrifice, repentance or denunciation with the help of wisdom, the seraph of a free path person seems to hide from him, keep his distance, close himself up to him, and abandon him. The light from the world of the seraph is obscured, an eclipse or "death during life" sets in, and a person feels queasy and frightened. During this dark period, the seraph seems to withdraw from the person's life.

The eclipse of "one's God" in oneself is one of the most difficult and desperate states of the inner world of man. A highly spiritual person is overcome by the horror of his own loss of spirituality and by spiritual suffering in view of the fact that nothing and nobody remain within his depths... Although the person had already been acquainted with such spiritual suffering before, he knew how to mask it within himself. Now he can no longer do it on the free path. The seraph makes use of spiritual horror to show that it is inadmissible to stop the ascent and drives the person ever further and higher on the free path.

On the free path of life, a person is marked by the total independence of thought – "his own thought." Taken together, his own thoughts manifest "his own truth" – the truth of his entire seraphic life. "His own thought" is stacked on "his own truth," gradually accumulating, growing and attaining a level at which it becomes a general idea or, more precisely, the "general theme of seraphic life."

A person's "own theme" brings together everything that has taken place in his spiritual life and on his life path. "His own theme" defines the personalistic personality of a free path person and thus manifests his highest purpose.

A person attains “his own spiritual theme” already during the third stage of the Path. The free path is the path of one’s own spiritual theme. A person that engendered his own spiritual theme and developed it sufficiently has performed the work of seraphic life.

The free path person is a “thematically successful” person. This is one of the legitimate results of the seraphic life of a person as such.

A person that has passed the Second Critical Point is initiated into mysteries from which he had still been excluded during the third stage. Nevertheless, these mysteries are not laid bare before him in sudden revelation or communicated to him as a secret but glimmer indistinctly, irresistibly attracting him and not letting him go. This may be a sort of sensation or vision. However, this sensation or vision has a will of its own that makes a person go to constant and protracted efforts to reveal what is indistinctly present in it. The voluntary revelation is not a given but something that one must work on. It gives a free path person the irresistible desire to seek. The rest depends on whether the person’s willpower and efforts prove sufficient under the time pressure of his remaining lifespan. This time pressure is so great that any self-indulgence or evasion can result in failure – in the non-performance of what had been assigned at the Second Critical Point.

A person that enters the free path differs from a three-stage person insofar as he receives a special personal task and cannot help but implement it. He is given a special purpose and direction of ascent on the free path in accordance with his assigned trans-personalistic goals.

The free path has a myriad of roads that bifurcate not by chance (not because things turn out that way) but in accordance with the purpose that is assigned on the basis of the traversed normative Path of Life. The summit of the Path of Seraphic Life properly speaking lies on the free path of life .

The free path is the work of the seraph through man rather than the work of man with the help and participation of the seraph in himself, as on the third stage of the Path. On the free path, the seraph works through the soul rather than in the soul.

The task of a free path person may have nothing to do with human affairs on Earth. Such a person works not for the human world but for implementing the Plan for man.

A free path person does not have parapsychic abilities, does not heal, is not endowed with personal hypnotic and charismatic power, does not know how to inspire people and does not want to do so. He is both far from and near collective inner life yet seldom plays a major role in it during his lifetime. Even after his death, his heritage (even if it inspires interest) is usually transformed beyond recognition.

12 (26).

There are two types of Second Critical Points. One establishes a free path person. The other launches a person onto the high path.

The free path person and the high path person are selected ahead of time. Beginning with the personality birth (or, perhaps, even earlier), one sees a noticeable tendency of path ascent towards either the free or the high path. All the same, one can enter either of them only at the Second Critical Point.

The Path of Ascent as such leads to the entrance to the high path through the third stage of the Path and the Second Critical Point.

All spiritual matters require action and effort. In particular, the entry to the high path requires work – in any case, it is not accorded in a heavenly lottery.

On the Path of Ascent of personal spiritual life, there are barriers before the entrance to the high path. It takes a lot of willpower to overcome them. However, this is not the sacrifice for the sake of sacrifice or the ascetic efforts that one had made just before the Second Critical Point or the overcoming of the personalistic hindrance and the main temptation of life. There is something unintelligible about the extreme effort preceding the entry to the high path and about its very necessity: this is suffering for its own sake on account of the sins of one's ancestors that one must assume and bear. It may be the suffering of reason overcoming the main temptation of life or the moral torment that is so natural during the repetition of one's life (cf. Part 14 of the big book) or the suffering of the sick body or the pain of losing somebody or something or different types of persecution. In any case, inner suffering must occur here. A person goes through torment to engender his new spiritual burden. He who approaches the high path must be ready to bear this suffering of spiritual generations.

There is no single high path for the different people traversing it. People of the high path are so unlike each other that they do not appear to be each other's successors and seem to be people with different spiritual lives. They may differ in their assertion of truth and understanding of life.

The highest maturity of seraphic life is attained on the high path. The entry onto the high path requires the attainment of the highest level of spiritual consciousness. The spiritual experiences on the high path attain the greatest possible vividness and universality. They include supreme experiences of the Ideal and supreme experiences of conscience and the supreme depth and productivity of different types of spiritual life.

By himself, the one-stage person is incapable of perceiving truth. The two-stage person can perceive it. The three-stage person is capable of engendering his own truth and tries to do so. The free path person not only profoundly transforms already discovered layers of truth, just as the three-stage person, but also opens up new layers. The high path person acquires a consciousness of life that is not characteristic of a person on Earth.

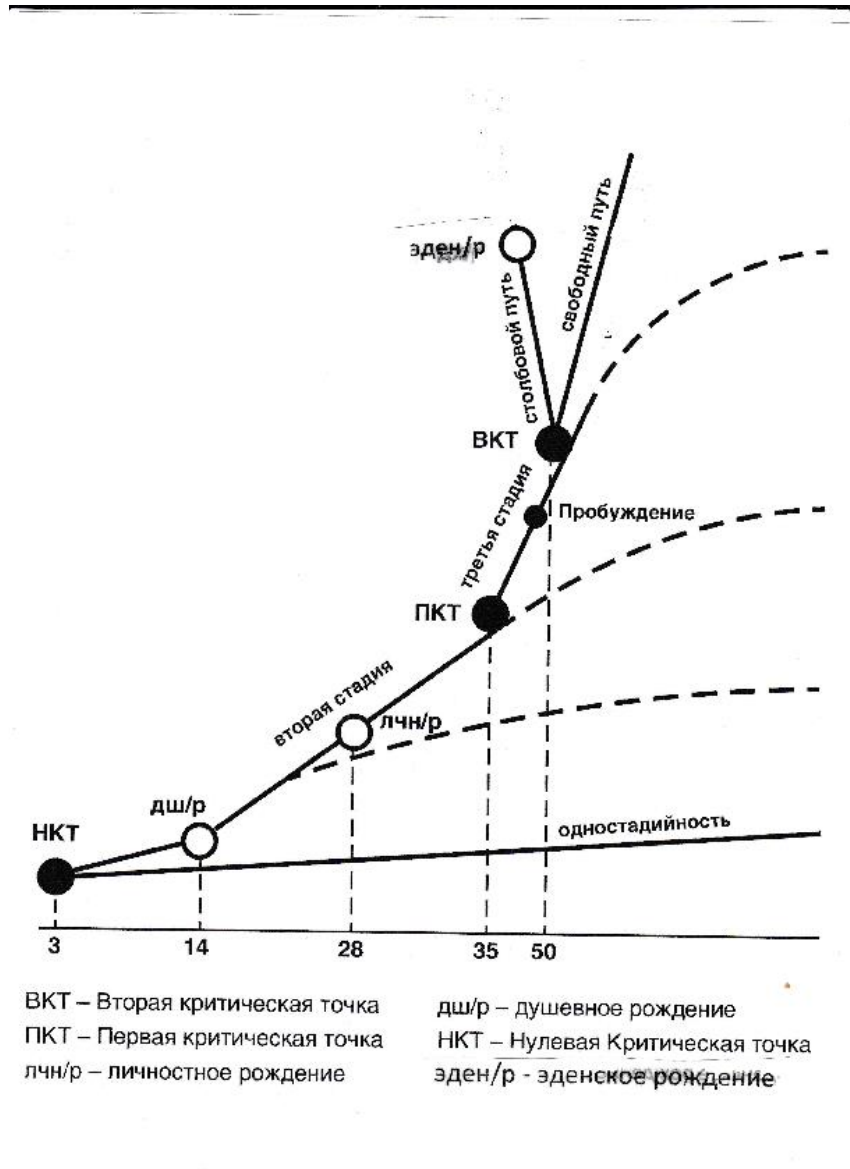


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НКТ = ZCP

дш/р = in. bir.

вторая стадия = second stage

лчн/р = pers. bir.

ПКТ = FCP

одностадийность = one-stage life

третья стадия = third stage

Пробуждение = Awakening

ВКТ = SCP

столбовой путь = staked-out path

эден/р = Eden. bir.

свободный путь = free path

SCP – Second Critical Point

FCP – First Critical Point

pers. bir. – personality birth

in. bir. – inner birth

ZCP – Zero Critical Point

Eden. bir. – Edenic birth

The high path person has the highest substantiality.

The summit of the high path attracts a person not just by its mysteriousness; as a spiritual Sun, it has its own force of gravitation and attraction. It is impossible to ignore this force – even at the risk of seeing something that does not exist on this summit.

The two and especially three-stage person feels an inner need of looking in the direction of these summits (if not actually seeing them). Without a doubt, such a gaze is necessary and productive for a person. It is impossible to get one's bearings sufficiently in human life without comparing the latter with the unfathomable summit at the end of the Path. One cannot make a full-fledged doctrine of man and his assigned life work unless one starts from the summit, the finish and the end.

Of course, a seraph that enters the free path changes the sensation and consciousness of life of a person yet nevertheless remains the same as he was during the person's personality birth – only a lot more vivid and distinct. However, things are different on the high path.

On the high path of life, the seraph himself strives to enter the highest state – the state of the life of the Persona.

Both the free and the high paths are traversed by a seraph. However, the free path does not lead to the next Path birth, while the high path leads to the Edenic birth, as a result of which the seraph, immersed in human life, becomes a Persona that surpasses the limits of the world of the seraph and enters into super-seraphic (Edenic) life. We are unable to describe it in detail in this book, however.

The Path of Ascent of personal spiritual life leads to the Edenic birth or the attainment of the state of life of the Persona. Edenic birth is the birth of the Persona from the seraphic embryo. The seraph is the intrauterine state of the Persona.

The free path person is a unique phenomenon of the spiritual life of mankind. The Edenic birth or the birth of the Persona is a metahuman phenomenon. A new super-human quality and a new super-human merit appear in the Edenic birth. Something necessarily changes in the human world with each birth of a spiritual Persona.

Each Edenic birth is a tremendous event for all mankind and the entire seraphic world.

To understand who is born in the Edenic birth and what is the Persona, one must understand man, his afterlife and the process of its creation in man, and the ultimate result of the transfiguration of man. All of this (and a lot more) is discussed in my three-volume work entitled *The Emergence and Transfiguration of Man*.

PART 3

THE JOINT ASCENT OF MAN AND WOMAN. THE FEMALE PATH OF ASCENT

1 (27).

One is naturally tempted to compare the stages of storgic spiritual life and the stages of the Path of Ascent of seraphic life.

Life à deux may be compared with one-stage personal inner life, although one should not forget that higher souls can become a lot more active in life à deux than in simple one-stage personal inner life.

In a way, two-stage seraphic life may be compared with self-induced storge. The third stage of the Path may be said to correspond to Co-Itinerancy.

The doctrine of storge is the doctrine of the principal Encounter of one's life. People come into the world not only for engaging in Encounters but also for implementing the definitive storgic Encounter and its supreme realization – Co-Itinerancy.

Co-Itinerancy determines the female spiritual ascent just as the Path determines the male ascent.

One of the goals of Co-Itinerancy is to assist in the entry to the free and high paths of life.

The work of seraphic growth is slower on the ascent path of women and faster on the ascent path of men. The work of storgic growth is slower on the ascent path of men and faster on the ascent path of women. Neither men nor women have advantages in collective spiritual life.

In contrast to male spiritual life, the situation of the spiritual life of women is dramatic. When a man cannot lead a seraphic life, he has a backup and a compensation in collective spiritual and storgic spiritual life. When a woman cannot live a storgic spiritual life or has not realized herself in it, she can very seldom find compensation in seraphic life. A woman must look for compensation in the collective spiritual life that offers itself to her in her life circumstances.

A man fails to lead a seraphic life on account of spiritual insufficiency. A woman often fails to lead a storgic spiritual life, because such was her fate. It is more important for a woman than for a man

to have collective spiritual life to fall back upon. On account of her great potential for spiritual life, a woman often enters a monastery because she has not been able to realize herself in storgic spiritual life and not because she is carried away by collective spiritual life.

Up to a certain point, the ascent of both man and woman goes from temptation to temptation, passing through inner traps. However, their ascent proceeds differently, and their goals are different. The man puts life to the test in order to find the ascending Path and enter onto it. The man falls into existential traps in order to learn to get out of them. He enters pseudo-paths in order to find the Path through negative experience. A woman may or may not be aware of the direction of her inner development, yet she does not look for it and is not familiar with the male torments of searching for the Path. In her ascent, there are quite a lot of places that she cannot pass on her own and through which someone must lead her.

The man must pass through traps – enter and leave them, get caught and escape – in order to discover the unknown and the unknowable in himself ahead of time, i.e., his own Path of personal spiritual life. The woman needs not to discover the unknowable but to overcome the knowable, i.e., the barriers erected by life in storge. The man's task is to find what is proper in seraphic life, while the woman's task is to overcome barriers to storgic spiritual life.

Seraphic life gives a man lessons ahead of time. Storgic spiritual life puts a woman to the test. The same tests and temptations serve for men as "itinerant tests" of their capacity to keep ascending or staying on the Path and for women as tests of their ability to overcome what co-itinerant fate has in store for her. The man looks for the path, goes astray, falls off and climbs back on. A scar remains and will make itself felt on the next stage of the Path ascent. The graph of the different stages of his Path is a polygonal chain. In contrast, the graph of a woman's Path is a gradual curve or straight line. If she encounters a mountain on the way, she climbs it. If there is an obstruction on the way, she makes her way through it. If a burden is put on her, she carries it.

Where the man comes off the Path, the woman throws her burden off.

If a man gets stuck or caught in an inner trap, he takes it as a sign that he is going in the wrong direction: he must make his way "forward" towards a different and new path. If the same thing happens to a woman, she must also make her way out – yet "backwards." However, life seldom gives the woman a chance to retake the tests of fate. The male task is to learn and to get unstuck, while the female task is to avoid getting caught or stuck, to withstand, and to endure. What she must endure and withstand is determined by her life encounters (which cannot be avoided) and her co-itinerant fate. It depends on this fate no less than on the woman herself whether she will succeed in storgic spiritual life or not.

The female labor of being the guardian of Co-Itinerancy requires endurance instead of exploits, patience instead of heroism, and reliability instead of sacrifice. A woman does not have to sacrifice her life, but it is essential for her not to betray or be unfaithful, no matter how much pressure life puts on her. Faithfulness, patience, endurance, tenacity, stability, firmness, and reliability in love and life are the main co-itinerant traits of a woman's soul and are all based on her strong willpower for overcoming the hurdles of life. In a certain sense, a woman's stability is more precious than her changeability.

In storgic spiritual life, a woman must bear and withstand the burdens that are placed on her. A woman values the strength, power and firmness of the man's performing will so much, because, paradoxically enough, all of these qualities are her own female qualities, whose lack must be compensated by the man. The latter is her assistant that builds on her female traits and efforts. When a man's woman does not want to bear her own burden and carry her own cross, the man must perish himself under her cross.

Every normal female soul strives for storgic union with a man. Women's liberation contradicts the sense of joint storgic being in the family and the Collective Soul.

In addition to ascending the Path, a man has another pressing spiritual task that involves the implementation of storge. The drama of male spiritual life is augmented by his total incapacity of creating storge by himself and at his own desire. The male spirit strives to build a nest in the female soul yet cannot do this until her spirit acquiesces.

The graph of the human Path of Life is, in actual fact, plotted not against physical or chronological time but along the time in which the flesh lives – corporal time. It would be incorrect to compare the corporal life of man and woman. Men and women of the same age cannot be compared corporally or spiritually. They are not contemporaries. Moreover, corporal time, in contrast to chronological time, does not flow uniformly. Tribulations of the flesh (such as disease) and, consequently, of corporal time are both necessary and inevitable on the Path both for men and for women. Nevertheless, for a man, they are one of the conditions of life that distort the timetable of his Path ascent. In contrast, they are normal for a woman. By itself, this clearly shows how difficult it is to speak about a regular schedule of Path ascent for a woman.

Abstractly speaking, corporal time flows faster (in comparison to physical time) for a woman than for a man. This puts the very possibility of female Path ascent in seraphic life in question.

A woman of the age of 20 has corporally lived more than a man of the same age. She is older than him. A woman has different corporal time than a man, and this time is connected with physical time differently for her than for a man. There are differences in the flow of corporal time between married and unmarried women, between a woman that has begotten and raised children and a woman that has never been pregnant, given birth or breastfed. For a woman, delivery, as a rule, marks a transition from one age to another – a transition for which she may be innerly prepared or not. Women that have given birth at different ages (say, 15, 20 or 30 years) also experience a different flow of corporal time over their entire life.

The male storgic period lasts for 10 years or so – roughly between the ages of 27-28 and 37-38. In contrast, the female storgic will may be realized at the age of 50, 55 or even 60. The storgic period in a woman's life lasts for 35-40 years and may begin as early as the age of 16. Most women are ready for storge by the age of 20. This is seven years earlier than the age at which the storgic period of the man's Path begins.

On account of her less energetic consciousness of personal spiritual life, the female soul is mostly incapable of the spurts of growth that the man uses to get out of different pits on the Path of Life. A woman that leads a masculine life in masculine temptations of false growth is virtually doomed in her Path ascent, all the possible merits of her soul notwithstanding. She is incapable of coming out of the self-induced motion towards an aim (not to speak of motion without an aim). This explains the futility of the spiritual ascent of a woman involved in the temptation of struggle (such as a female civil official, a businesswoman, a female public figure or a woman manager).

Of course, there are women that attain the state of consciousness of a three-stage man. These are singular cases, however, and each of them has a unique ascent trajectory. There is no normative Path of Ascent for the seraphic life of a woman.

The spiritual ascent of a man lies on the Path of seraphic life. The woman is a being that is co-itinerant rather than itinerant. This primordial women's state is not bondage but the itinerant singularity of the soul. The spiritual ascent of a woman lies in the Co-Itinerancy of storgic spiritual life. Just as we speak of an "itinerant (or non-itinerant) man" that traverses (or does not traverse) the Path of Ascent,

we can also speak of a “co-itinerant (or non-co-itinerant) woman” that is (or is not) capable of Co-Itinerancy.

Co-Itinerancy is not a combination of the male and female Paths or a supplement to the male Path. Co-Itinerancy is just as valuable, perfect and worthy as the Path itself.

Co-Itinerancy requires, on the one hand, a man that has passed through itinerant personality birth and continued his active ascent of the Path and, on the other, a woman that is capable of Co-Itinerancy (a “co-itinerant woman”) and that has attained a certain level in storgic spiritual life.

The foundation of Co-Itinerancy is the intertwinement of a man’s own truth and a woman’s own conscience. He takes her as his conscience, making her conscience his own, while she takes him as her truth. Two types of seraphs are involved in Co-Itinerancy. On the male side, there is the seraph that implements the Path and emits rays of the spiritual consciousness of truth (the male seraph or the seraph of truth). On the female side, there is the seraph that is imbued with free moral spiritual consciousness (the female seraph or the seraph of conscience). Between them appears a cherub that increasingly combines (in cherubic growth) these seraphs into a single storgic union. It is cherubic growth that practically realizes Co-Itinerancy.

Co-Itinerancy or co-itinerant storge is the threefold spiritual ascent of the “itinerant man,” the “co-itinerant woman,” and the cherub (storgic being).

The storgic being acts broadly and unpredictably in human life. All types of human love contain something of the mystic origin of the storgic being, which bears the secret of storge. A human being never knows the will of the storgic being. This is the main secret of storge.

In the storge of revelation, a man and a woman receive the storgic being as a gift and must try to retain it. The storge of revelation promises Co-Itinerancy yet does not guarantee it. True threefold storge is realized in Co-Itinerancy.

In seraphic life, the main and leading agent is the man. In storgic spiritual life, it is the woman. The woman is in charge of introducing the storgic being into human life.

A woman gives birth, bringing a new person into the world. The co-itinerant woman summons her cherub into Co-Itinerancy, lets him in, and then organizes Co-Itinerancy. The woman is a vehicle of the storgic being. She bears the storgic being through human life. Among all her other guardian duties, she must guard Co-Itinerancy and preserve her cherub. In a certain (and not yet fully understood) sense, the woman is the organizer and guardian of the non-mortal life of her man.

The female Path of Ascent is the path towards the Co-Itinerancy of storgic spiritual life and, in this sense, the Path of Ascent of the co-itinerant woman. The woman’s co-itinerant ascent is the process and stages of attracting (conceiving) and engaging (engendering and developing) the cherub. The cherub is a direct participant of Co-Itinerancy, its driving force and its result.

2 (28).

We employ the term of Co-Itinerancy in two senses: Co-Itinerancy as the storgic spiritual life of a woman and Co-Itinerancy of an itinerant man and a co-itinerant woman. The latter is a continuation and realization of the former.

The road of female co-itinerant ascent is not only difficult (it cannot be otherwise) but also shaky. The co-itinerant fate does not always give the woman whom she needs when she needs him. Even if it does, it does not shower her with gifts or spoil her but offers her will and faith special inner trials that are often at the limit of her possibilities. For each and every gift of co-itinerant fate, a woman

must pay with self-sacrifice. A woman that manages to attain Co-Itinerancy in her maturity was born with such inner qualities that few women inherit and even fewer realize. She must be able to retain her inner purity and radiate the warmth of storgic love. Conscience, humility, meekness, striving for good, and self-sacrifice: all of these states and phenomena reflect the initial state of openness of a soul within itself and its primordial willingness to step out of itself, to lose its selfness, and to break through its isolation.

The man in personal spiritual life traverses the Path of Ascent and participates in Co-Itinerancy. The woman in storgic spiritual life paints the picture of Co-Itinerancy, although she is not barred, properly speaking, from the seraphic Path of Ascent.

The traversal (ascent) of Co-Itinerancy has its own tides, fluxes and refluxes. To a certain extent, co-itinerant tides are superimposed on itinerant tides or correspond to them. We can speak of itinerant and co-itinerant inner birth and of the itinerant and co-itinerant triggering of inner life. However, they are not the same at all, even if they take place in the same person and during the same period of life and mix so thoroughly that one has trouble telling them apart.

On the itinerant tide of personality birth, the man enters the storgic period of life. The woman's storgic period begins after her co-itinerant inner birth. The female co-itinerant tide of personality birth launches the process of Co-Itinerancy and begins to implement it in practice. The female personality birth in Co-Itinerancy does not exclude personality birth on the Path. Nevertheless, these are different events and take place in different areas of the inner world.

Both on the Path (for a man) and in Co-Itinerancy (for a woman), the first acclivity is the acclivity of triggering: the triggering of personal spiritual consciousness for a man and the triggering of storgic spiritual consciousness for a woman.

Everybody experiences first love. However, only innerly born people experience the love of inner birth. The ideally pure love of the inner birth of a boy or girl triggers the launch of spiritual and storgic spiritual life. Generally speaking, a boy may be triggered for the Path even without the love of inner birth. As to a girl, she is triggered for storgic spiritual intertwinement, and this triggering cannot occur without love. The love of inner birth is necessary for a girl not only for the ideal experience of love (as for a boy) but also for storgic spiritual triggering itself. Storgic spiritual triggering is also the goal of the subsequent series of girlish loves that she experiences from her inner birth to her personality birth.

During the period of ideals, a boy acquires the consciousness of the separatedness of his soul. He recognizes the separatedness of his soul in the consciousness of the phantom of "his own God" – in the consciousness of the Ideal. He expresses his separatedness and inner uniqueness by keeping his distance from other souls, the Collective Soul and everything that infringes upon his inner independence. After his inner birth, a boy begins to refute and rebel, trying to escape from all inner guardianship that had existed up until then.

During the same period, a girl experiences infringements on her soul differently. She closes herself off rather than keeping her distance. The more keenly a girl feels her inner separateness, the more she feels ashamed, embarrassed, hurt and afraid of the nakedness of her soul. For her, the consciousness of inner separateness takes the form of shame, in which her soul feels its separatedness and which acts as a screen.

At the summit of the first acclivity of Co-Itinerancy (at the age of 12-14), a girl is timid in her soul, embarrassed by everything, trembling from shame, and easily hurt. She is untouchable. She is constantly reproaching, accusing, defending herself and complaining. "You should be ashamed of yourself!" "Shame on you!" These words seem so biting to her, because they allude to a certain ideal or highest point that one can ascend to, lean upon or refer to.

The girl has a different experience of the ideal than the boy, although what is characteristic of her is naturally partly present in him, too, and vice-versa. The boy experiences the ideal of the incarnation of “his own God” and is sensitive to anything not being up to his idea of perfection. The girl experiences the ideal of conscience and the state of inner attraction and is sensitive to everything that violates her notion of ideal attraction. He has an ideal sensation of the proper, while she has an ideal sensation of the improper.

From the innerly born girl emanates the light of the ideal of attachedness. Where a boy feels desecration, a girl quivers from disattachedness and the rupture of threads of attraction. The girl’s sensation of the ideal is not in her but from her and towards her. It is simultaneously the product and means of expressing inner separatedness. She evaluates everything that occurs to her with the help of the storgic ideal of mutual inner relations.

The concrete experience of the ideal or ideal aspirations and notions is always preceded by a thirst for the ideal, which cannot be evoked from the outside. One can evoke recollections of this thirst if ideals had previously existed in the soul. They remind itinerant men of their souls in their youth. A woman remembers her young soul differently. She usually recalls bygone events, people and passions around herself, herself in them and, most importantly, what underlay all her inner experiences – her girlish yearning. Girlish yearning is the basic functioning mode of the soul of a co-itinerant girl and the state of readiness that her soul enters in anticipation of co-itinerant work and the inner birth of Co-Itinerancy. This yearning is quiet and melancholy.

The feeling of girlish yearning is, on the one hand, a feeling of loneliness, forsakenness and unsettledness and, on the other, a demanding expectation and harbinger of something. The innerly triggered girl is familiar with this vague thirst and impatient anticipation that soon turns into the desire to love and be loved. Girlish yearning may well be the general and primordial state of guilt that triggers the soul of a co-itinerant woman in her youth with the help of her conscience.

On the acclivity of inner birth, a man is launched into the labor of the free manifestation of consciousness, the torment of truth and the spiritual ascent of the Path. Similarly, a woman (not every woman, of course, but only a co-itinerant woman) is launched into the labor of amative spirituality, the torment of conscience and the good, and the storgic ascent into Co-Itinerancy.

In a pagan society, female meekness is a character trait that is pleasant and attractive for some and unattractive for others. For us, meekness is important as a style of female spirituality, an aspect of personality, and an inner image.

Meekness is not weakness or the lack of certain traits but the power of the awareness of the spiritual grandeur of someone who is dear and beloved for you and before whom you cannot help but feel humble. Take a look at a girl that is being triggered into storgic spirituality, sense her spiritual shyness and feel her eternal self-abasement before a certain powerful and stern force that she bears within her and that keeps good track of her. Her inner meekness is based on the reverential awe of a bride for her groom. Meekness is the expression of the feeling of a girl with which she prepares for future Co-Itinerancy. The higher a man is on the Path of Ascent, the more he is overwhelmed by a woman’s meekness.

Meekness is a necessary condition for a woman’s inner birth and inner storgic birth. A girl does not need to be meek for itinerant inner birth in personal spiritual life, which is the same for her as for a boy. However, although it sets its sights on itinerant personality birth (which is rare for a woman, however), inner birth does not open the way to a woman’s co-itinerant personality birth.

The acclivity of inner birth of a co-itinerant woman is a school of meekness and contained selfishness, i.e., humility. Meekness and humility are the qualities that make her a woman spiritually (in the co-itinerant sense). Here begins the path of her storgic ascent.

Female inner birth takes place in the expectation of the co-itinerant storgic being – one's own cherub – and prepare the woman's higher soul to accommodate it. In meekness and humility, the inner birth summons and invokes the storgic being towards itself.

During the period of ideals, a boy sees the highest point before himself and strives to attain it. During the same period, a girl in the self-effacement of meekness sees the highest point over herself, strives to take part in it and desires to be worthy of it. He hears the appeal and ascends towards the voice, while she is judged, hands herself over, and does as the voice says.

One clearly sees that a co-itinerant woman has been launched into storgic spiritual life when her soul experiences the need of entering into a full-fledged relationship with another soul and is capable of doing so. In the first triggering of Co-Itinerancy, the girl acquires the potential for spiritual participation, whose degree is determined by the force with which her soul has been triggered. A woman's inner birth is not a one-time event but a process of triggering storgic spiritual life that never ceases in her as long as she "lives" as a co-itinerant woman.

At the start of Co-Itinerancy, a girl is triggered to some extent between the hypothetically smallest and hypothetically greatest values with countless possibilities in between. What triggering level corresponds to her inner birth? It is difficult to say, because, even if a greatest triggering value exists, it is a potential that becomes visible only when the woman becomes involved in the seraphic life of a man.

Every co-itinerant woman has her own itinerant man. Abstractly speaking, for a woman to undergo the inner birth of Co-Itinerancy, she must be sufficiently triggered to be satisfied with storgic self-realization with the help of a man that underwent personality birth. In actual fact, she waits for him and seeks him. This is difficult, very difficult for her. She needs help.

The soul of a co-itinerant woman is born in tears as well as shame, inner pain, compassion, guilt, offence, pangs of conscience and pity. During this period, she must be subjected to inner pain: the more inner pain she feels, the better it will be for her storgic spiritual triggering.

Life puts the co-itinerant woman to the test. The entire storgic growth of female Co-Itinerancy lies in overcoming. To be triggered, a co-itinerant woman must pass through inner initiation. A co-itinerant woman should be brought up not on lofty notions that protect the soul (they may also be used yet not in the first instance) but on pangs of conscience, pity towards friend and foe, and pain from injustice, humiliation, vileness and evil. One needs to broaden a girl's soul as much as possible without fearing to tear it, just as people in Antiquity were not afraid to maim the flesh of youths by forcing them to undergo certain trials. One should not shield a girl's soul from the inherent nightmares of reality. Let her absorb as much as she can in her early youth. Will she experience pain? Yes, of course, sad though it may be. Nevertheless, when she is all bruised and battered, her soul will be capable of triggering.

3 (29).

The soul of a woman that has not been triggered is unfamiliar with the work of overcoming Selfhood. On account of her life conditions, character or collective inner demands, a woman may be submissive and obedient. However, she may well be submissive without self-sacrifice and obedient without humility. Spiritual work, including storgic spiritual work, is free. Only the lowest level of the

storgic good is accessible to a soul in captivity. At higher levels, storgic growth is exclusively the result of the free work of the soul.

At the age of 18 or 19, a girl is obstinate in her very consciousness of her own self. Girls that are not prone to independence and contrariness at this age are a rare exception. For a co-itinerant woman, too, the afflux of meekness usually gives way to the reflux of obstinacy.

During the afflux of meekness, she feels guilty; during the reflux of obstinacy, she is proud and self-righteous. She becomes conceited instead of humble. And she complains everywhere and about everything.

A woman cannot fail to think about the near and remote future, even if she believes that she lives in the present. Every girl, even the most obstinate, beseeches, "Organize my life and give me a destiny!" The main temptation at this time is the temptation to control one's own destiny. This temptation stems from the impatience of finally determining one's destiny rather than from the fear of the future. People frighten a girl with the terror of solitude, yet she herself, frightened or not, trembles with impatience. Her soul is hungry, she sits before a table full of food, and she wants to eat. However, in contrast to the purgatory of the male Path, the desires in the purgatory of female Co-Itinerancy should not be consummated.

On the reflux of the first tide of the Path, a man encounters swamps into which he can fall, traps in which he can get stuck, and lures that can make him stray forever. However, all of these screens and barriers do not hide the Path. They are not temptations that must be "defeated" – in contrast, he should become familiar with them and even get stuck in them so as to learn to escape from them and survive. Here his capacity of Path ascent rather than his tenacity is put to the test.

A woman on the reflux of the first tide of Co-Itinerancy must be patient, perseverant, and enduring. Here, on the reflux of obstinacy, one of the main character traits of the ascending woman is put to the test: the strength of her inner will that she will subsequently use to guard Co-Itinerancy.

Everyday life practice is not at all suited for the co-itinerant woman, who resists in her youth her own inner penchant for succumbing to the enticement of happiness. She does so, not because she is waiting for fate to offer her something better but because she hears in her soul a quiet co-itinerant voice whispering to her, "Wait! The time has not arrived! It's too early!"

Blessed are the poor – yet not those who were not able to become rich. Blessed is the woman who managed to pass through the reflux of obstinacy without succumbing to temptation – yet not because the temptation had not been strong enough but because she did not allow herself to succumb and because she held out, knowing that the only way to find and enter her own door is to have the willpower and courage to walk past many open doors, to restrain herself and not to give up in her soul or body.

On top of everything, she must have a strong designating and implementing will for resisting the pressure of different natural forces acting from within and without. These forces lie not only in the passions and desires of her flesh but also in her striving to arrange her own fate and in her fear of the future. The natural force also appears where one extols the heavenly delights of love and, generally speaking, entices a girl in ways that are virtually impossible to identify. She must resist even without identifying them – a superhuman task, to be sure.

Just as a man before personality birth cannot distinguish between his own and foreign elements in his soul, so a woman before the personality birth of Co-Itinerancy does not know which door is hers and which is not. Her task is to pass the test of endurance, be patient in her soul and wait for her co-itinerant personality birth. A woman who does not withstand this inner test either keeps trying different doors, irresponsibly coming in and out of them, or chooses a door that is not hers, enters it and tries to

room in as best she can. In both cases, she loses the good of Co-Itinerancy. The soul of the co-itinerant woman must learn to be patient in its own self. Such inner willpower is unknown to the man until the fourth stage of the Path of Ascent.

Whereas the male soul passes in purgatory the itinerant tests for endurance on the Path, the female soul during the corresponding period of life takes a test for patience. The man is destined to haul the burden of the Path, while the woman must consolidate Co-Itinerancy. Thus the endurance of the male soul that is necessary for spiritual growth corresponds to the tenacity and patience of the female soul that is needed for storgic growth. Endurance in life is, generally speaking, a trait of the male soul, the main character and the male body. Patience is a quality inherent to women – a trait of the female soul, the female character and the female body. It is the same thing for a man to cave in under hard work, tribulations, dangers, difficulties, praise and other temptations as for a woman to lose patience – not to hold out, to give in to the pressure of the flesh, to explode, to grow tired of female duties, to cede to temptation, and so on. To tell the truth, people have always understood this, and, despite the similarity between endurance and patience, they have expected the former primarily from men and the latter primarily from women.

The reflux of obstinacy must not become too protracted. This would be dangerous, because the female soul becomes atrophied without active storgic work. The reflux of obstinacy continues until the female soul finally gives up, because it has found what it searched for or because it is too tired to wait any longer.

A woman's personality birth stems not from her seraph of conscience but from her cherub. The woman brings the cherub out into human navigation as soon as her female fate allows her to do so.

The acclivity of female Co-Itinerancy arouses the cherub and prepares him for new storgicities.

The inner birth of the female Path prepares the storgic being for navigation. Personality birth marks the total readiness of the storgic being to take its place in threefold storge.

Female personality birth takes place in storgic spiritual rather than personal spiritual life – in the regime of love rather than reason. In personality birth, a man knows "his truth" in the depths of his soul and can already follow it to a certain degree. In personality birth, a woman learns the correct direction of her personal storgic attraction ("her love") and tries to realize it.

The storge of revelation is also miraculous insofar as it can arise before the co-itinerant personality birth of a woman and before the itinerant personality birth of a man. In the storge of revelation, it is not the woman that brings the cherub into navigation, but he himself chooses whom to enter, goes by himself into the person, transmutes by himself infatuation into storge, and realizes himself by himself.

Just as a man in itinerant personality birth, a woman who undergoes co-itinerant personality birth must know (or discover) her true self. A woman finds her love and her authentic self, i.e., her readiness for Co-Itinerancy, at the same time as she finds her storgic being. In the male itinerant personality birth, the seraph comes to the man. In the female co-itinerant personality birth, the woman manifests the storgic being and, in this sense, finds it.

The storgic being becomes the active foundation of human life when it produces in the upper person what the seraph produces in itinerant personality birth, i.e., forms the seraphic personality of the Structure. The storgic being realizes the higher person in the Structure and establishes the storgic personality of a woman. The latter, in turn, brings the storgic being into human life, giving it the possibility of realizing itself. As a result of personality birth, the storgic being and the co-itinerant woman directed themselves at one another – for mutual attraction and mutual realization.

After undergoing personality birth, a woman is ready for Co-Itinerancy. To this end, she must also find “her own” man that has undergone personality birth and implement storge with him.

A woman must forge the storgic image of her own man from youth on – from her co-itinerant inner birth when the storgic being only begins to emerge in her life. The emergence of the image of her own man for storge is one of the clearest indicators of a woman’s co-itinerant inner birth.

In co-itinerant personality birth, a woman becomes ready for storge, and, making the storgic choice of her own free will, she now confirms the merit and rightness of her storgic image of her man.

For both men and women, storgic love acquires vision after the personality birth.

For both men and women, the love of personality birth is an attempt to implement Co-Itinerancy. For men, this love is situated on one of the summits of purity of the ascent graph. There is no co-itinerant ascent graph, just as there are no fixed age summits of purity for a woman. The love of personality birth and the implementation of Co-Itinerancy may be deferred for a woman, though not for decades. The reason is not just that it is difficult to avoid squandering the energy of co-itinerant personality birth over decades. To enter Co-Itinerancy, the love of female personality birth must bind a woman with a man that has undergone personality birth yet (preferably) not entered the third stage of the Path. This limits the age of female co-itinerant realization somewhat.

A woman that undergoes personality birth and begins to implement Co-Itinerancy changes her attitude towards the man. He goes from being the main condition of realizing her dream of future happiness (and hence an object of play, struggle, care, temptation and infatuation) to someone whom she bears within herself—someone who is with her yet not for her own sake.

Before co-itinerant personality birth, a woman lacks the seriousness of the fiery male intellect. She is present alongside him (perhaps even esteeming and admiring him) yet does not accompany him in the sense of Co-Itinerancy. Sometimes, a woman wants to be guided by the intellect of one man yet prefers another. Such dualism is impossible for a woman that has undergone personality birth and is implementing Co-Itinerancy. She loves the man from whom she has conceived by the spirit of truth. Her love for him is not just an inner attraction but also a kind of spiritual well-being, in which she finds herself in the “normal state of the spiritual being,” to cite Tolstoy. Before him, she was (as she knows for sure!) in a false inner state. Now, thanks to him, she has found her true spiritual state, and even the slightest hint of the possibility of losing it causes her spiritual anguish. The reason for her serious and profound attitude towards the man that has fertilized her with his intellect is that, for her, he is her own light source, for which she recognizes her spiritual responsibility from a sense of love elevated to the level of spiritual gratitude.

Over the years, every woman acquires experience and “knowledge of life” and, from this position, takes an indulgent look at her past. The woman who has passed through personality birth into Co-Itinerancy rejects her former self not because she had not been familiar with life at the time but because she herself had been different at the time. Such a woman considers her inner state before co-itinerant personality birth to have been dark and unenlightened. If such an awareness of the resurrection, enlightenment and salvation of one’s own soul is sustained and if the horror of one’s former self only grows instead of abating, then it is a sure sign that co-itinerant personality birth has taken place. For a man, personality birth is the exchange of the foreign for his own and the discovery of himself among the foreign. For a woman, the personality birth of Co-Itinerancy is literally a “birth” or the entry into a new and distinct world that differs from her rejected earlier world as light differs from darkness and the lack of light. She enters a door that leads out of the reign of blindness, stupidity, self-abuse, self-deceit, evil and non-life. It turns out that life, good, vision and intelligence begin only after passing through this door.

A woman's storgic partner may or may not be a man of the highest virtues. Even the highest qualities of the male soul may not satisfy the potentially co-itinerant woman. However, according to the Plan, she needs for storge an itinerant man for whom Co-Itinerancy is essential.

4 (30).

In contrast to personal spiritual good, storgic spiritual good does not depend on a single person. A person's storgic growth requires growing into another soul that must accommodate him within it and, moreover, give him space and nourishment for his own work.

In contrast to the man in personal spiritual life, the woman in storgic spiritual life cannot ascend alone. The woman's solitary path leads to co-itinerant personality birth. At the stage of "her own life" and beyond, her co-itinerant ascent depends on the man and his Path. The necessity of high levels of female storgic spiritual life also stems from the fact that Co-Itinerancy is connected to the Path rather than the Path to Co-Itinerancy. The more itinerant a man, the brighter the woman's co-itinerant fate and the heavier her labor in Co-Itinerancy.

A woman depends not only on her storgic fate (which is primarily offered to her by the man) but also on the free will of her co-itinerant storgic being, which may refuse to participate in the proposed storge, set up limits, drag its heels, or move in its own direction. The independent storgic being has its own aims that we know very little about.

The co-itinerant woman needs an itinerant man. She looks for him yet so often does not find him. As for him, he needs a co-itinerant woman. One needs a special blessing to open the entrance to Co-Itinerancy. In itself, Co-Itinerancy is a supreme boon granted from above. It is difficult to enter into Co-Itinerancy. Nor is it easy, after entering into it, to preserve it in one's life. The former takes place by God's mercy, while the latter is the affair of two intertwined human souls.

The storgic being is given to a woman only once and for a single time. At any given moment, she has either already mortgaged her storgic being or not and implemented it or not. If she has once given her storgic being to a man unsuccessfully, she subsequently lives with other men, as a rule, without a storgic being, as if she had not undergone personality birth. A man may become dear to her over the years without becoming her storgic beloved.

At the First Critical Point, a man's itinerant maturity is put to the test. There are no Critical Points in a woman's ascent. However, she passes a co-itinerant test: a test of faith, inner fidelity, and staunchness in Co-Itinerancy. It is the woman that primarily implements the latter: this is why her soul takes the co-itinerant test of faith. It must either pass it or abandon Co-Itinerancy.

Storgic spiritual life has its own religious feeling – the storgic religious feeling – with its own faith and its own ideal. The co-itinerant ideal indicates the direction of storgic growth. Faith is the driving force of the storgic spiritual feeling.

An ideal (just as reason-wisdom in a way) is an anticipating generalization of vision and a special kind of inner knowledge determining the directedness of the soul, i.e., the vector of its aspirations. Faith is the force behind the action of inner willpower that gives the soul a sense of its power. The faith of storgic spiritual life, just as the Faith of collective spiritual life, is experienced as something that is absolutely powerful and capable of overcoming everything.

The more powerfully the soul of a co-itinerant woman is triggered and the more staunchly she withstands the trial of inner will on the reflux of obstinacy, the easier the co-itinerant trial of faith (that she undergoes after the entrance to Co-Itinerancy) will be for her.

Most often, people fail to withstand life's trials at the critical moment when their endurance and patience should bear fruit. This occurs, because the soul has not taken the firm decision (act of faith) to withstand at all costs, no matter what it takes and come what may. The reason is not that the will to withstand is not strong enough but that it begins to seem at the peak of trial that it is futile to keep resisting. The sense of futility is the hardest trial of faith. Only a woman that has withstood to the end is introduced (by the storgic being!) into the co-itinerant phase *per se* of a woman's life.

The co-itinerant personality birth of a woman launches the storgic religious sense of her soul and establishes her faith. This faith triumphs through self-sacrifice. The latter is the apotheosis of storgic spiritual faith. The origins of this perfect faith lie in co-itinerant personality birth.

Faith, humility and self-sacrifice are all connected in the co-itinerant female soul. Just as one can say that self-sacrifice in love comes from faith, so one can also say that faith in humility comes from self-sacrifice and that humility comes from faith and self-sacrifice.

Can the loss of faith be amended? Both the female and the male souls possess a faculty of self-resurrection that often corrects errors on the Path and in Co-Itinerancy. This faculty is called repentance. Repentance is just as intrinsic to the religious sense as faith and ideal. Repentance, faith and ideal are three aspects of the religious sense both in personal spiritual life and in storgic spiritual life. The storgic being manifests itself just as vividly in repentance as in faith and ideal.

Faith sustains and moves the higher soul. Repentance sustains and revives the latter. The will to repentance not only purifies, elevates and revives the soul but also storgically connects it with the soul towards which it is turned. An abundance of repentance contains an abundance of humility, an abundance of faith, an abundance of self-sacrifice, and thus an abundance of co-itinerant grace.

There is no love without giving, yet some women love the men for whom they sacrifice something, becoming heroes; others love men to whom they yield and for whom they renounce themselves. Love of the first kind is full of female selfishness: in it, the woman believes herself to be higher and more important than her partner. In love of the second kind, the woman does not belong to herself but submits to the man's guidance. Only a woman that has become co-itinerant can withstand the trial by faith and pass the test of overcoming love's pride, inner selfishness and self-interest in the storgic relationship.

Storgic growth can be accelerated by the love of the co-itinerant woman, who is prone to self-renouncement out of faith rather than self-sacrifice out of passion. She renounces herself not for the man's sake. Without self-renouncement, the woman cannot preserve and nourish their co-itinerant storgic being. A woman's self-renouncement in Co-Itinerancy is a sign of her successful co-itinerant development.

The relation of a co-itinerant woman to her itinerant man is always religious. With the help of this storgic religious sense that guides her storgic will, a woman develops her worldview, discovers herself, her own man and her own world, acquires storgic good and implements Co-Itinerancy.

The co-itinerant woman gives herself up; she does not calculate, assess or try to change her fate or course of life. She simply follows the call of faith-fidelity and faith-trust and goes where they direct her. The stronger the faith, the more durable the Co-Itinerancy and the more ample the room for the further growth of storge and the co-itinerant good.

In male personal spiritual life, "one's own truth" comes into the soul in a vague form that has not been clarified by reason: it is a divination of truth and one's mystical predestination, about which it is easy to get the wrong idea. A truth that has still not been understood takes root in the mind thanks to the faith of male personal spiritual life – the faith in what is emerging and entering the higher soul. If I know that my life has a meaning that I cannot understand yet that there exists Someone for whom my

life has profound meaning, I know it not from self-knowledge but from faith. The former is usually acquired by reason, while the latter stems from the religious sense. Many years may pass before my reason grasps what I once took into my soul thanks to the sound of its “voice” that I perceived with the religious sense of personal spiritual life. Reason strives either to confirm what was acquired by the religious sense or to liquidate the results of the latter’s work. The confrontation of reason and faith inevitably occurs in male personal spiritual life, gives it content, and plays an important role in spiritual growth. The work of reason destroys superstitions, debunks authorities, and dispels illusions. They reappear in the work of the religious sense yet on a new and higher spiritual level and from a greater plenitude of life consciousness.

The work of reason is weaker in the female soul, and so the woman entrusts her reason to a man, which is possible only through an act of storgic religious sense or trust. When she finds her vehicle of reason, the woman takes his reason into herself through an act of faith and, in so doing, establishes the harmony of faith and reason in her higher soul. In contrast to the itinerant man, the co-itinerant woman experiences no contradiction between faith and reason. The female soul grows differently – first and foremost, through storgic growth that requires the knowledge of the good that is based on the needs of the female soul and is an object of her faith rather than the knowledge of truth that is acquired by reason-wisdom. The co-itinerant woman triggered by personality birth knows “her own good” and believes in it, just as a man knows and believes in “his own truth.” It is this storgic good that the soul of the co-itinerant woman truly desires and the power of whose faith is tested.

The faith of female storgic spiritual life has its work cut out for it no less than collective spiritual Faith and more than the faith of male personal spiritual life. The staunchness of one aspect of a woman’s storgic religious sense – the staunchness of her ideals – is tested by the strength of the other aspect of her religious sense – the strength of her faith. The soul of a co-itinerant woman is, first and foremost, a believing soul. It believes, it is faithful, and it willingly entrusts itself.

For a man, the tragedy of life lies in the lack of meaning and the bankruptcy of ideals. A woman may be aware of the tragic nature of life yet experiences it with her storgic religious sense rather than with her reason. For her, tragedy lies in the collapse of her faith. Her existential suffering is the suffering of faith: she can feel betrayed in her faith, attachment, love, hope and fidelity. A man disillusioned in life believes that all is vanity and lacks meaning. A disillusioned woman believes that everything is transient and ephemeral and there is nothing to believe in.

All (and not just co-itinerant) women strive to believe yet suffer from faith. The striving to believe leads to female gullibility that is often pernicious and that gets the upper hand of women’s inherent cautiousness. If a woman believes in nothing and no one, she has fallen as deeply as she can.

A woman ascends the acclivities of female Co-Itinerancy through faith. Faith as a component of the ascending storgic spiritual force elevates the female soul to Co-Itinerancy. As the foundation of a woman’s storgic will, faith raises her to the level of Co-Itinerancy where she must fully entrust herself. Regardless of the binding force of pre-storgic amorous passion, if the ensuing inner relationship is based on anything except faith and the storgic religious sense, it will never be strong and durable but will break up or degenerate over time.

Co-Itinerancy is marked by the storgic triad of two seraphs and a cherub.

The seraphs and cherub cannot allow the dissolution of Co-Itinerancy, which would be a life catastrophe for them, too. A storgic catastrophe cannot occur in a realized Co-Itinerancy. If it begins to loom, then one of the partners is taken off the life path to avoid such a turn of events.

Co-Itinerancy cannot arise before a man enters the period of his own life. The female path of ascent properly speaking leads up to the moment when a woman becomes ready for the love of a man's personality birth. It is a stroke of luck when a man enters Co-Itinerancy before the First Critical Point; this greatly increases his chances of embarking upon the third stage of the male Path. Simply being in a storgic relationship helps a lot at this time. Co-Itinerancy mostly forms during the third stage of the male Path, where it is essential.

Passing the Second Critical Point does not depend on human activities and feelings. Whereas the successful passage of the Second Critical Point is decided from above, Co-Itinerancy makes it more probable for an itinerant man to enter the high path. Though not a necessary condition for entering the high path, Co-Itinerancy gives an advantage when passing the Second Critical Point.

The male path is the Path of the ascent of the seraph of truth in man. The seraph is also the main agent in the preamble to the ascent of the female path before co-itinerant personality birth. Before Co-Itinerancy, the cherub is not the prime figure of storgic ascent. He implements storge and waits for the moment when he himself can enter the life of storgically intertwined people.

After the emergence of Co-Itinerancy, the cherub takes charge of storgic ascent. Shaping and consolidating storge up to this time, the cherub now begins his own (cherubic) ascent. Storgic (cherubic) ascent is the ascent of the cherub and of man together with the cherub. Co-Itinerancy is the stage of the cherub's rule over storgic intertwinement.

Co-Itinerancy has a value of its own and not just insofar as it helps a man to traverse the male Path of Ascent and to replenish the energy spent there. Co-Itinerancy gives the cherub a special metaphysical dignity in the post-human world in which he lives. A cherub that has participated in Co-Itinerancy changes. Co-Itinerancy is the act of the mystical revitalization of the cherub to a new fullness of life.

On the free path, the cherub ascending into Co-Itinerancy transforms the male seraph's "own theme," creating both the theme of the co-itinerant life of a man and a woman and the theme of the two seraphs and the cherub in their metaphysical world. "One's own theme" in Co-Itinerancy is the work of both the seraphs and the cherub.

What is the role of the cherub in one's own sacrifice at the entrance to the high path and on the high path itself? How can one understand the storgic spiritual ascent of a man and a woman in its entirety, up to its highest levels? Why does God and man need storge and Co-Itinerancy? What is the purpose of the mystical work performed in Co-Itinerancy?

To clarify these and other issues related to the ascent of the seraphs and the cherub, we are still lacking many notions that are introduced in the vast expanses of the second and third volumes of *The Emergence and Transfiguration of Man*.

AFTERWORD

The book *The Emergence and Transfiguration of Man*, whose contents are presented below, approximately follows the trajectory that my thought took for several decades while writing it. This is apparently the reason why the book turned out to be so difficult to comprehend as a whole – all the more so as its three volumes taken together are quite long (over a thousand pages).

All of this led me to write a series of small books based on *The Emergence and Transfiguration of Man* (which we sometimes call the “big book”). These books have a different structure and are very concise – thanks not only to textual cuts but also to the abridgement of ideas and doctrines. Each of these small books (the first of which you are currently reading) may be considered separately, yet all of them taken together will not cover even remotely the entire material of the big book.

To facilitate comprehension, the small books present the big book in a highly abridged form. They may be called the big book’s “calling cards.” They will inevitably evoke many questions, the answers to which are found in the big book.

The Emergence and Transfiguration of Man is intended for particularly motivated readers that would like to get better acquainted with the thoughts and theses that are presented in a concise and abridged form in the small books.

The text of the big book and the small books are available on the website mardov.org. One can contact the author at the address imardov@mail.ru.

As an addendum to this book:

THE EMERGENCE AND TRANSFIGURATION OF MAN

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