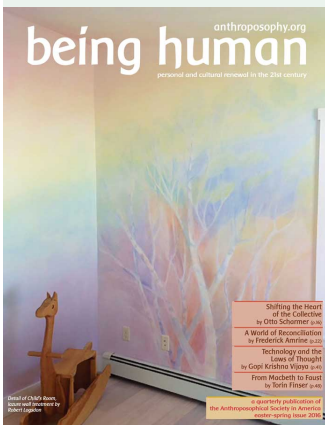


IN THIS SECTION:

Even anthroposophists have trouble appreciating the scope of Rudolf Steiner's vision and insight. Fred Amrine gives us a sequence here—two essays of his own, a review of an important book, and translations of key excerpts from Rudolf Steiner, which can open our eyes to the necessities of a truly global culture for humanity, both as Steiner saw those almost a century ago, and as seen now by some remarkable contemporaries of ours.

The reviewed book by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, whose call for “feel-thinking” and “feel-acting” sounds so very familiar to students of Steiner, might find a place on all our shelves. And Prof. Amrine's own “North-South Aphorisms” are a two-hop “shout-out” to Steiner and to the poets Goethe and Schiller before.



A World of Reconciliation in Light of the Second International Congress of the Anthroposophical Movement

by Frederick Amrine

The Second International Congress of the Anthroposophical Movement, which unfolded before an audience of 2,000 in Vienna over eleven days in June 1922, was the largest public event that the movement undertook during Steiner's lifetime. It was a sequel to the highly successful First International Congress at Stuttgart of September 1921. Two great intentions animated the program: reaching out to a wider public, and defending anthroposophy against growing attacks by making it more immediately visible within public life.

Vienna's renowned *Musikverein* was the venue. Mornings featured lectures by a long list of anthroposophical luminaries: Hahn, Schwebsch, von Heydebrand, Stein, Rittelmeyer, Uehli, Pelikan, Kolisko, Blümel, Baravalle, Leinhas, Husemann, Unger, Heyer, and Schubert. In



Musikverein, interior. Photo Hans Weingartz, CC BY-SA 3.0 de

the mid-afternoon, there were breakout discussions organized by discipline: Chemistry, Education, Medicine, Linguistics. Late afternoons were devoted to the arts, including instrumental music, creative speech (Marie Steiner), singing (Svårdstrom-Werbeck), lectures on the arts (Steffen and Schwebsch), and two performances of eurythmy at the *Volksoper*. The heart of the event, however, was a series of ten evening lectures by Steiner himself. The audience included many notable artists, scientists, and other thinkers. Steiner boldly addressed the great issues of the day, and at the same time foresaw and addressed some of the greatest issues of *our* day.

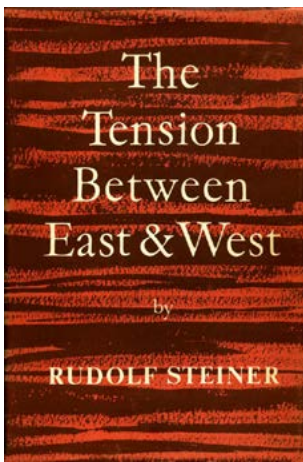
A wealthy member named van Leer offered to cover any financial losses on the sole condition that the Congress be “cosmopolitan.”¹ His demand comported with Steiner's own wishes, and the whole event was suffused with that spirit. Steiner's notebooks² show that he prepared by reading widely in the academic literature of multiple fields, especially the social sciences, so that he would be able to build bridges by speaking about recent research in its own idiom. As Steiner himself would later note, at no point did he speak the word “anthroposophy.”

The main themes that ran through Steiner's lectures were the historical evolution of consciousness, the transformation of abstract, “scientific” consciousness into higher modes of cognition, and social renewal. ... Who are the thinkers, and what are the burning issues Steiner would address today? Arguably the axes have rotated 90° since 1922...

1 *weltmännisch*

2 GA 83; *Westliche und östliche Weltgegensätzlichkeit: Wege zu ihrer Verständigung durch Anthroposophie* [The Tension between West and East: Paths toward Reconciliation through Anthroposophy] (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1981), pp. 314-37.

The main themes that ran through Steiner's lectures were the historical evolution of consciousness from East to West, the transformation of abstract, "scientific" con-



sciousness into higher modes of cognition, and social renewal. To speak so affirmatively of the East was daring in a way it is hard for us to imagine today. But Steiner's lectures were radical, and still feel radical to us today, for other reasons besides. Chief among them is the critique of capitalism from within the heart of Europe, which would have required courage in any case, but was downright brazen given the

subaltern status to which the defeated Central Europeans had been reduced. Steiner certainly sought to *reconcile* East and West, but he did so while simultaneously criticizing both of them from a "Southern" perspective³ within the subjugated Middle. In place of nineteenth-century capitalism, he held up a vision of a "threefold social order" that is oriented toward the future, but has deep roots in wisdom traditions that still understood human nature itself as triune: body, soul, and spirit.

Steiner's ten lectures became volume 83 of the *Collected Works (GA)*. They are currently available in English as *The Tension between East and West*,⁴ a translation originally published in 1963 by the appropriately "mainstream" press Hodder & Stoughton, with a fine introduction by Owen Barfield. Given that it summarizes a wide swath of anthroposophy so brilliantly, captures a great moment in the early history of the movement (Marie Steiner called it the "highlight"), and delivers concepts central to the threefold social order, it is a strangely neglected book. The cycle deserves attention in any case, but all the more so in that it is a model for the presentation of anthroposophy to the public.

Who are the thinkers, and what are the burning issues Steiner would address today? Arguably the axes have rotated 90 degrees since 1922; in many ways the East has succumbed to the West; we live more in a tension between North and South. Hence I believe Steiner would want to address critics of Eurocentrism and unreconstructed capitalism such as Boaventura de Sousa Santos, author of

the challenging study *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*.⁵ Let them converse; let us begin their virtual conversation. To that end, I review Santos' book with some discussion of the larger "post-colonial" and "subaltern" movements of which it is an epitome below ("The Tension Between North and South"). But Steiner will have the first word: I have selected and translated key excerpts from Steiner's own condensed summaries of the Congress, a distillation of his distillations, as it were. They follow immediately below.

I am sure you will agree that the result is a potent elixir. Steiner's "Report" on the Congress, together with a series of "West-East Aphorisms,"⁶ both penned shortly after he returned to Dornach, are included in GA 83, but not in the only translation still in print, which is unfortunate. Both are surprising documents, not least because they mount a powerful critique of Eurocentrism, and hence provide a powerful counterargument against specious accusations that anthroposophy is Eurocentric and even racist. *Steiner was a prescient and a radical critic of Eurocentrism decades ahead of the curve.* My own "North-South Aphorisms," rotated 90 degrees, are offered in the same spirit.



But most surprising of all is to realize that here, in June 1922, we already get inklings, subtle foreshadowings, of *The Foundation Stone*. At the heart of the Congress lies an extraordinary paradox that, as is so often the case, points at a deeper truth: Steiner's distillations of the movement's most public moment foreshadow the revelation of its most esoteric Mystery. The heart of that Mystery, and also of the Second Congress, is a Michaelic message of cosmopolitan inclusiveness.

*Lasset vom Osten befeuern,
Was durch den Westen sich formet*

*Let this be fired from the East
And through the West be formèd.*

³ More on this below.

⁴ Reprinted by the Anthroposophic Press/SteinerBooks in 1983; available for \$5 on Kindle. An earlier translation (*East and West: Contrasting Worlds*, 1930) is out of print.

⁵ Boulder and London: Paradigm Publishers, 2014.

⁶ The odd locution "West-East" signifies immediately to cultivated German-speakers as an allusion to Goethe's late cycle of poems in emulation of the medieval Persian Sufi poet Hafiz. A sensitive English translation of Goethe's text has been published by Martin Bidney: *West-East Divan: Poems, with "Notes and Essays": Goethe's Intercultural Dialogues* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2010).

Regarding the Vienna Congress of the Anthroposophical Movement

by Rudolf Steiner

Excerpts from his June 18, 1922 Report in Dornach⁷

... We called it the “West-East Congress,” after all. That decision was motivated by our conviction that this is a moment when Western civilization—and I say this now with a view to the prevailing spiritual undercurrents⁸—simply *must* arrive at an understanding of the world’s other cultures.

What Eastern culture experiences as the *maya* of the sensory world is experienced as autonomous reality by the cultures of the West. What Westerners experience as an ideological construct is experienced as self-creating reality in the East.

I once pointed out here in Dornach also how a British colonial administrator had rightly said that the vantage point from which to regard world affairs was currently shifting from the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean over to the Pacific Ocean. It is fair to say—and it is of immense importance: Earlier it was Europe and Europe’s connection with America that was determinative. It has been determinative since the 15th century, when Europe was more or less cut off from Asia by the in-

curSION of the Turks. At that time a great cultural upheaval took place, and the cultural life of modernity [358/359] became essentially a culture oriented toward the West. Now that the vantage point of outer cultural life has shifted towards the Pacific, a process has begun whereby the whole Earth must become cosmopolitan,⁹ and all cultural issues must be dealt with inclusively.¹⁰ But since people who wish to interact in any way at all must understand and even trust one another, cooperation ultimately presupposes understanding at a spiritual level.¹¹

... Now of course a great deal is still needed in order

7 GA 83, pp. 356–60. Translated by Frederick Amrine.

8 *vorzüglich aus geistigen Untergründen*

9 *ein großes Gebiet*

10 *einheitlich in Bezug auf alle Kulturfragen*

11 *auf geistigem Gebiete*

to build the spiritual foundations that are necessary for such an understanding. Today the economic situation is such that it places extraordinary pressure on us to collaborate. But even though it might occasionally appear otherwise, we can’t allow ourselves to hope that the restructuring¹² of these economic relationships can create anything more than a temporary surrogate. That surrogate will continue to wait for something definitive¹³ until new *spiritual* relationships have called forth mutual understandings that penetrate to the center of our hearts.¹⁴

Excerpts from “West-East Aphorisms”¹⁵

by Rudolf Steiner

[*The Tension between East and West in Light of the Evolution of Consciousness*]¹⁶

... What Eastern culture experiences as the *maya* of the sensory world is experienced as autonomous reality by the cultures of the West. What Westerners experience as an ideological construct is experienced as self-creating reality in the East. If the contemporary East were to find within the Spirit it perceives as real the power to grant *maya* the strength of existence,¹⁷ and if the West were to take from its experience of Nature enough life to see the living Spirit at work within what it dismisses as ideology, then mutual understanding would arise between East and West.

The East enjoyed a spiritual experience of religion, art, and science as completely unified ... Westward flowed the great wave of Wisdom that was the beautiful light of the Spirit, and that inspired piety among peoples who were filled with an enthusiasm fired by the arts. Then religion gradually crafted its own, separate existence,¹⁸ now only Beauty remained bound to Wisdom ... Later, Wis-

12 *Ordnung*

13 *ein Definitivum*

14 *ins Innere des Menschenwesens*

15 GA 83, pp. 361–70. Translated by Frederick Amrine, indebted to a version published as a freestanding booklet by Mercury Press (date and translator unknown).

16 These rubrics were devised and interpolated by F.A.; they are not in the original.

17 *die Seinsstärke geben*

18 *erbildete sich ihr Eigenwesen*

dom was given over to thinking; it became knowledge. Art was transferred into a world of its own. Religion, the source of all, became the heritage of the East; art became the monument of the epoch during which the Central Region reigned supreme; knowledge became the autonomous imperatrix of its own field. Thus did the intellectual life of the West come into existence.

[Tasks for Reconciliation in the Spiritual-Cultural Sphere]

Out of the wholeness of his own nature, Goethe discovered the world of Spirit that had plunged down into knowledge. But he longed to see the Truth of knowledge reflected in the Beauty of art. This drove him toward the South.¹⁹ Whoever follows him in spirit can find a religiously fervent mode of cognition²⁰ that struggles to attain artistic revelation²¹ within Beauty.

... To the peoples of the West a science of nature was given when Copernicus and Galileo rose up among them.²² They had to seek the Spirit by looking inward. There the Spirit still concealed itself from them, and they saw only drives and instincts. But those were merely the ghosts of matter that presented themselves to the eye of the soul, because that eye was not oriented toward the Spirit yet. As soon as the reorientation toward the Spirit commences, the inner ghosts will vanish, and we shall gaze upon the Spirit through the lens of our own human nature, just as the peoples of the ancient East gazed upon the Spirit through the lens of Nature. By way of our inner ghosts shall the spirit of the West arrive at the Spirit ... and in this way the bridge shall be built between East and West. ... Should the peoples of the East ever begin to feel the rays of the Sun within their shimmering Moon of Wisdom,²³ and should the peoples of the West ever begin to experience within the rays of the Will-Sun²⁴ the Shimmer-of-the-Moon-of-Wisdom,²⁵ then the West-Will shall lend strength unto the East-Thought; then the West-Thought shall redeem²⁶ the East-Will.

19 i.e., toward Italy

20 *ein religiös inniges Wissen*. Note that *religiös* is the adverb here: Goethe was religious in his fervor rather than fervently religious—a distinction that makes a profound difference!

21 *Offenbarung*, “revelation” in the strong theological sense

22 *ihm [dem Westmenschen] erstanden*

23 *Weisheitsmond*

24 *Willenssonne*

25 *Weisheit-Mondesschimmer*, the strongest of five neologisms in quick succession here!

26 *erlösen*, a verb with the same religious valences as “redeem” in English.

[Tasks for Reconciliation in the Sphere of Rights]

... In the ancient Orient, human beings labored within a theocratically imposed²⁷ social order. In that sense, one was either a master or a worker.²⁸ As cultural life moved westward, the relationships between individual human beings started to become conscious. The labor that one person performs for another became intertwined with other such issues. The concept of the value of labor intruded upon nascent legal thought. A great deal of Roman history recounts how the concepts of labor and justice gradually coalesced. As culture pressed on further towards the West, economic life assumed ever more complicated forms. It pulled labor into its sphere, and the inherited legal forms could not keep pace with the demands imposed by the new economic structures. Concepts of labor and justice fell into disharmony. Restoring that harmony is the great social problem of the West. The heart of the issue is figuring out how labor can find the right forms within the sphere of rights without being torn out of that context by the demands of the economic sphere.

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[Tasks for Reconciliation in the Economic Sphere]

... The emergence of the industrial complex calls for the creation of associative connections that are structured according to the demands of economic life itself. Such associations should give people confidence that their needs will be met within the physical constraints that are present. Discovering the right kind of associative life is the task of the West. Should the West prove up to that task, then the East will say:

Once our lives ran their course in solidarity,²⁹ but now that has disappeared; “human progress” has taken it away from us. The West will make it blossom forth again out of associative economics. Our lost faith in humanity has been restored. ...

27 *geistgewollt*

28 *Arbeitsmensch*

29 *in Brüderlichkeit*

North-South Aphorisms

by Frederick Amrine



1. The idiom in which anthroposophy was *given* is not and cannot be the idiom in which it will ultimately *spread*. We are now a *worldwide movement*.

2. Only by confronting the ghosts of materialism shall the West be freed of its inner demons.

3. All anthroposophists should make a mental pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lives. Go via Sufism and avoid the crowds. Let Hafiz and Rumi be your guides.

4. “New situations demand new magic.” [E. E. Evans-Pritchard]

5. Recall that, for all their faults, Theosophists were early critics of Eurocentrism and leaders of the drive for Indian independence.

6. As Ed Sarath has taught us, jazz is Africa’s grand philosophy of freedom that lives perpetually in the creative moment of its own improvisation.

7. Gilles Deleuze lived off the Cartesian grid as a spiritual nomad. He understood that the cultures of the North are deterritorialized songlines.

8. Modern tourism grew directly out of the Grand Tour. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, Italy was Europe’s epistemology of the South. It was in Italy that Goethe discovered the archetypal plant and the concept of metamorphosis; Italy is where he was reborn as a phoenix. No Italy, no *Faust*.

9. A Goetheanum of the South might not be a building—or indeed any kind of visible structure.

10. Inclusiveness is a profoundly and genuinely Michaelic ideal.

11. Fatal attraction of the North: the Protestant Ethic seduces the Spirit of Capitalism.

12. Escape Herod by fleeing to Egypt.

13. The great Canal joining East and West—lies near

in the South. The great Canal joining North and South—lies in the Near East. The canals of Venice were long the gateways to the East and South. The English Channel—*der Kanal*—and the canals of Amsterdam are receding into the distance at great speed.

14. Plot your trajectory in the higher geometry of the Complex Plane. The Real runs from west to east, but the Imaginary is even more powerful, and it runs from south to north. The heart lies south of the head.

15. The Northern Hemisphere is of the earth, earthy; the Southern Hemisphere is oceanic.

16. Gauguin traveled to Tahiti. Van Gogh and Cezanne gravitated to the South of France. Klee made a pilgrimage to Tunisia. Picasso, Kandinsky, and Marc took their inspiration from Africa and Oceania. High modern art was born as an epistemology of the South.

17. Steiner’s claim that the division of labor inevitably will lead to altruism is one of his most difficult—and beautiful—ideas. The acme of divided labor is original spiritual research. Genuine spiritual research can be done *only* for the sake of others.

18. The vanguard waits patiently at the apex of Kandinsky’s ascending triangle, looking to receive the descending “spiritual Moses.” Anthroposophy embraces this task gladly and unapologetically.

19. The coyote is infinitely wise. Trickster, white magician, psychopomp. The shaman’s animal helper. Commune with him. Felix Koguzski and Joseph Beuys were shamans.

20. Black Elk’s initiation is healing Medicine for the West from the South. Old like the hills and the stars, the ancestors are having a council behind a rainbow door, and dancing helpers fly to our aid from all four quarters of the world. “They are appearing, may you behold!”

21. “The Spirits hear it in East and West and North and South: / May human beings hear it!” [Rudolf Steiner, *The Foundation Stone*]

The Tension between North and South

A review of *Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (Boulder and London: Paradigm Publishers, 2014), xi, 240 pp.

by Frederick Amrine

As I argue above, in “A World of Reconciliation,” it is easy to imagine the radical sociologist and legal scholar Boaventura de Sousa Santos as just the kind of interlocutor Steiner would have sought to engage today. Santos’ radical, interdisciplinary “sociology of absence” and his evocation of “the South within the North” map onto the first half of Steiner’s lectures in Vienna, while his focus on the neglected “rights” and “spiritual-cultural” spheres complements Steiner’s own preoccupations in the “sociological” second half of the lecture cycle. *Epistemologies of the South* resonates powerfully with many of the most liberating aspects of anthroposophy, but it also challenges us to realize the transformative potentials of Steiner’s work even more fully and adequately. Although Santos doesn’t address anthroposophy directly, his work can be a stimulus and a guide to thinking through some deep issues that beset the Anthroposophical Society and movement.

Santos’ Argument in Outline

“The epistemology of the South” is a generic name for many different kinds of peasant, lay, popular, and indigenous knowledges that remain invisible because they are construed as the “other” of an “abyssal thinking” that sees only modern, instrumental science and ignorance.³⁰ It entails a recognition that “the understanding of the world far exceeds the Western understanding of the world,” and that “emancipatory transformations” may follow “grammars and scripts” very different from those developed even by Eurocentric critical theory (237).

Across the line drawn by abyssal thinking lies only absence, a “state of nature” outside any social contract: “Beyond the equator there are no sins.” “The primitive,” “the traditional,” “the unproductive,” “the premodern, the simple, the obsolete, and the underdeveloped” are

only of a few of the many names we have for these “modes of nonexistence” (173-174). Without an epistemological break, this abyssal monoculture will continue to reproduce itself endlessly until the ecology of subaltern knowledges is destroyed.

All knowledges have both internal and external limits. The “learned ignorance” that should be our epistemological ideal is keenly aware of both, but hegemonic knowledges are oblivious to their external limits, beyond which they see nothing (207). Abyssal thinkers fail to understand that “what we do not know is the product of our ignorance and not of ignorance in general” (209).³¹ Opposing this, “the utopia of interknowledge consists of learning new and less familiar knowledges without necessarily having to forget the old ones and one’s own” (188). The ultimate goal is a different *quality* of knowledge that doesn’t try to control nature or people; Santos calls this “knowledge-as-solidarity.” It’s what Barfield, explicating Steiner, calls “participation.”

Santos envisions an open-ended dialogue among these knowledges, in which the emancipatory will is guided by many compasses (210).³² “Polyphonic” and “prismatic,” these disparate knowledges will coexist in the “radical copresence” (191) of a restored “ecology of knowledges.” The ultimate goal is *buen vivir*, “living well,” which means living with dignity, for all the peoples of the Earth.

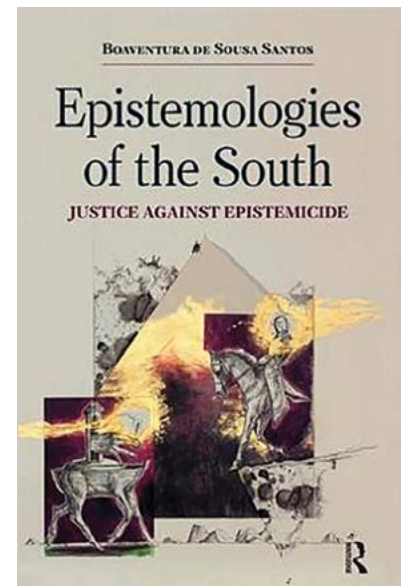
Other Anthroposophical Resonances

What Steiner and Santos both understand clearly (but Marxists generally do not) is that social healing waits

30 I see in this account of an abyssal line with no center some intimations of the anthroposophical account of evil: on the one side of the line, only Luciferic seduction; on the other side, only Ahrimanic fear. Santos is better on the Ahrimanic temptation, e.g., where he describes science as a set of options with no root in the past, only in the future.

31 Anthroposophy is also a victim of this abyssal thinking that suppresses all minority reports and hence an outstanding but unnamed exemplar of the “South” within the North.

32 Cf. Steiner’s radiant evocation of this ideal in GA 151, *Human and Cosmic Thought* (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2000).



upon epistemological transformation: hence Santos' call for "self-reflection" leading to "a new epistemology" (69). At its heart, this book is a profound critique of what Owen Barfield, following Rudolf Steiner, termed "onlooker consciousness": modern science adopts the stance of a spectator, then forgets the perspectivity of its view, conflating reflection with reality (145). In economics, this "small scale" scientism reduces us to *homo economicus*, "docile bodies and strangers" (152). Hence it is no surprise that new theories have become "new idols replacing old ones and demanding of citizens the same kind of submission as before" (7/9).³³

Like Steiner, Santos calls for a new kind of "heart thinking": "If life could make distinctions, it would make

Santos calls upon us to "feelthink" and "feelact," because "to think without passion is to make coffins for ideas," and "to act without passion is to fill the coffins." Passively reproduced ideologies fail because they remain closed to "surprise and wonder," which awaken new emancipatory energies and capacities.

many, but certainly not this one between affections and reason, lest it deny itself as life. This is particularly true of the life of transformative action in which the reality consists of giving life to what does not yet exist and can only come about by reasonable affections and affectionate reasons" (5/7). With characteristic rhetorical flair, Santos calls upon us to "feelthink" and "feelact," because "to think without passion is to make coffins for ideas," and "to act without passion is to fill the coffins" (10). What we need is "an affective-intellectual horizon" that overcomes "linearity, simplicity, unity, totality, and determination" (13). Passively reproduced ideologies fail because they remain closed to "surprise

and wonder," which awaken new emancipatory energies and capacities (88). To combat this danger, Santos confronts his own opening "manifesto" with a self-ironic "counterpoint" that he calls his "minifesto," printed on facing pages.³⁴

In these ways and many more, *Epistemologies of the*

South is a philosophy of freedom, which Santos calls "knowledge-as-self-emancipation" (176). Santos echoes Steiner in lamenting the lack of will in our thinking, a failure of desire which cannot imagine new forms of emancipation, but only alternate forms of regulation (71). For Santos, becoming a "competent rebel" requires the development of an energetic "living thinking" as a direct experience of the spirit; of moral technique, moral tact, and above all moral imagination: "in order to be efficient, powerful interrogations must be like monograms of the spirit engraved upon things. They must irrupt by the intensity and concentration of the internal energy that they carry within themselves. Under the conditions of the present time, such irruption will only occur if powerful interrogations translate themselves into destabilizing images" (89). Participating in the ecology of knowledges strengthens the will by expanding awareness of human possibility, and "thus permits one to ground an imagination of the will that is incomprehensible to the conventional understanding of modern science" (210).

Without ever referring to Steiner, Santos provides many confirmations of ideas central to the Threefold Social Order.³⁵ Both saw "Marxist problems without Marxist solutions," due to Marxism's tragic epistemological and spiritual bankruptcy: because it deprived the proletariat of emancipatory spirituality (22), Marxism failed to liberate, becoming instead "the double of regulation" (71). Like Steiner, Santos dismisses party politics as "the unproductive Northern binary of left or right" (41). In his companion volume *Another Knowledge is Possible*, Santos implicitly recognizes the threefold nature of a just social order by insisting on both diversity (Steiner's "spiritual-cultural" sphere) and equality (the sphere of politics and rights), because "universalistic presuppositions" lead to denial of identities, while difference without equality opens the door to exclusion and oppression.³⁶ As one might expect, Santos is especially adept at envisioning new legal forms, including a new social contract with "the earth, nature, and future generations" (93). Above all, he echoes Steiner in his call for an economics of altruism, asking pointedly for example, "Why is the economy of reciprocity and cooperation not a credible alternative to the economy of greed and competition?" (23).

33 Schiller makes the same argument in his essay *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* (1794; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), which was one of the main inspirations for Steiner's Threefold Social Order.

34 Some anthroposophists might find food for thought here as they work through perceived dilemmas in the relationship between "the Society" and "the movement."

35 See also the related collection edited by Corinne Kumar, *Asking, we walk: the south as new political imaginary*, vol. 2 (Bangalore: Streelekha, 2007), pp. 379-382.

36 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, ed., *Another Knowledge is Possible: Beyond Northern Epistemologies* (London: Verso, 2007), p. xlvi.

Challenges and Inspirations

Over and above these many echoes of Steiner's work, *Epistemologies of the South* unfolds many dimensions that have the potential to challenge us as anthroposophists, and to help us actualize anthroposophy's full potential.



Boaventura de Sousa Santos

Let me give just three examples.

One of the most inspiring aspects of this book is its immense conceptual creativity and fertility. If Gilles Deleuze is right (as I believe he is) that the task of the philosopher is to create concepts, then Santos is a philosopher of the first order, as witnessed by the

many striking coinages quoted throughout this review. Santos is exemplary in his powerful exercise of conceptual freedom.

I also find Santos tremendously helpful in trying to understand Steiner's characterization of the age we have recently entered as "Michaelic." Steiner's hints about the need to overcome Eurocentrism at the East/West Congress are multiplied a thousandfold here. Santos calls upon us to create "the new transnational political culture called for in the new century and the new millennium" (68), a new "insurgent cosmopolitanism" (90), a "centrifugal consciousness" that would overcome Northern hegemony (93) by gathering up the "meteoric" remnants of the damaged ecology of knowledges (171). Or, as Santos puts it in a language that may sound more alien initially, but needs to be mastered if we would engage in a dialogue with much other progressive social science today:

What cannot be said, or said clearly, in one language or culture may be said, and said clearly, in another language or culture. Acknowledging other kinds of knowledge and other partners in conversation for other kinds of conversation opens the field for infinite discursive and nondiscursive exchanges with unfathomable codifications and horizontalities (15).

And finally, Santos has gone a long way towards discovering the Holy Grail of the evolution of consciousness: the concept of "participated time" adumbrated in the concluding chapters of Barfield's *Saving the Appearance*

es.³⁷ Santos rightly identifies the linear time of "onlooker consciousness" as an idol in Barfield's sense; in its place, we need to cultivate a rich ecology of temporalities, an "intertemporality" (177) that includes circular time, glacial time, cyclical time, "the rich soteriological idea that used to link the multiplicity of worlds (salvation, redemption, reincarnation, or metempsychosis)" (169); the living time that pulses with "durations, rhythms, sequences, tempos, synchronies, and nonsynchronies" (150). Modernism's definition of history as progress has weakened our wills through endless deferral of expectation into the future (72); it has compressed the present to an evanescent instant, within which there is no space for social experimentation (175) or even mindfulness as such. Instead, we need to enlarge the present and contract the future, so that the present is decelerated, "giving it a denser, more substantive content than the fleeting instant between the past and the future to which proleptic reason condemned it. Instead of a final stage, they propose a constant ethical vigilance over the unfolding of possibilities, aided by such basic emotions as ... wonder feeding hope" (186). But the most breathtaking innovation here is Santos' evocation of the transformative power of the past through colloquy with "the nonconforming dead" (75). Modern thought—even the most progressive modern social thought—devalued the past and allowed the future to hypertrophy: "The past was seen as past, hence, as incapable of erupting in the present. By the same token, the power of revelation and fulguration was wholly transposed into the future" (73). Hence "we no longer know how to envision the past in an enabling way" (74); in Ahrimanic "onlooker time," the past is always a mere report, and never a resource that could irrupt into the present at a moment of danger as a source of nonconformity.

Steiner's hints about the need to overcome Eurocentrism are multiplied a thousandfold here. Santos calls upon us to create "the new transnational political culture called for in the new century and the new millennium," a new "insurgent cosmopolitanism," a "centrifugal consciousness" that would overcome Northern hegemony by gathering up the "meteoric" remnants of the damaged ecology of knowledges.

37 Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearance: A Study in Idolatry* (London: Faber, 1957; rpt. 2nd edn. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1988).

And finally, one of the volume's greatest attractions is that it functions as a gateway to much other important work. Santos' bibliography alone is worth the price of admission. *The Epistemology of the South* is important in itself, but it is also the epitome of a large movement with many dimensions, within which Santos is a leading figure. One can set out from this volume to explore African "sage philosophy" and other non-Western modes of social thought such as the Hindu concept of *dharma*, the Islamic *umma*, the South American culture of *Pachamama*, Gandhi's *Satyagraha*, or the clauses in the Ecuadorian constitution establishing "the rights of nature" (23)—"new social movements" that are actually very old in some cases, and all part of an "ecology of knowledges" that needs to be preserved against the onslaughts of Western scientism. Unequal exchanges bring with them the danger of the

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"epistemicide" invoked in Santos' subtitle, a vast "wasting" of social knowledge and experience (102). One especially intriguing "epistemology of the South" is the southern African concept of *Ubuntu* (which might well be translated "being human"!), especially as implemented by the late Nelson Mandela, and by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in his Truth and Reconciliation Commission.³⁸ The key tenets of *Ubuntu* are generosity, affirmation, respect, community, reciprocity, compassion, dignity, mediation, and resolution of conflict. In the spirit of *Ubuntu*, Nelson Mandela introduced his former jailers as "honored guests" at his inauguration. This shining concept actually resonates with Steiner's call for reconciliation through truth in the aftermath of World War One, rather than the retributive justice that the Allies imposed, with disastrous consequences.

Some Criticisms

In the context of this review, the most fundamental shortcoming of *Epistemologies of the South* is its neglect of Rudolf Steiner. Anthroposophy with its many languages is itself an "ecology of knowledges" that would have con-

³⁸ In light of the interest that such concepts have aroused, the radical sociologists Jean and John Comaroff have gone so far as to write a book entitled *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America is Evolving Towards Africa* (Boulder: Paradigm, 2012).

tributed vastly more to Santos' argument than his three prime exemplars of the "South" within the West: Lucian of Samosata, Nicholas of Cusa, and Pascal.

More specifically, Steiner's sophisticated epistemology would have helped Santos to avoid the fallacy of imagining effective communal action as arising directly out of communal thinking.³⁹ The main consequence of this mistake is Santos' repeated, highly rhetorical call to demote the intellectual "vanguard" to a "rearguard." At its best, anthroposophy is immune to this kind of regressive anti-intellectualism. As Santos himself is well aware, it is more than a little ironic that this demand issues from a highly trained academic holding positions at prestigious Western institutions including the University of Wisconsin's Law School. Santos seeks to excuse himself by invoking the need to embrace "enabling contradictions," but the problem is deeper than that. His failure of imagination in this regard is just as "abyssal" as his opponents': he is incapable of envisioning a "vanguard consciousness" that would transcend "onlooker consciousness"; he cannot see that "feelthinking" is possible at a high intellectual level. Kandinsky's ascending spiritual triangle is a much better model—and one inspired directly by Steiner.⁴⁰

This fallacy is related to another major deficit: Santos lacks Steiner's fully developed notion of the evolution of consciousness (although he hits on some key aspects through inspired intuitions). As just one example of many that could be adduced, he sees the acme of materialism in the mid-nineteenth century as a historical "accident" that could easily have been reversed (139). Hence we are ultimately led to wonder whether Santos appreciates sufficiently the all-important difference between original and final participation. Steiner overtrumps Santos with even more radical senses of cultural space, time, and identity. Anthroposophy is the ultimate "sociology of absence."

³⁹ Cf. Gandhi on *Satyagraha*: "In actual practice the secret of *Satyagraha* is not understood by all, and many are apt unintelligently to follow the few... I do not know any historical example of pure mass *Satyagraha*" (M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa* (Stanford: Academic Reprints, 1954), p. 188).

⁴⁰ Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (New York: Dover, 1977).

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