TWELVE WAYS OF SEEING THE WORLD

PHILOSOPHIES AND ARCHETYPAL WORLDVIEWS FOR UNDERSTANDING HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

Mario Betti

Hawthorn Press

Translated by Matthew Barton

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Twelve Ways of Seeing the World

In today's multicultural society, religious and philosophical outlooks of all kinds often seem to clash irreconcilably. Mario Betti is concerned to see the validity in each worldview, and to seek truth not in one narrow perspective but in the overall context of all the possible different outlooks. In clear, accessible language, he helps readers engage with twelve perspectives on the world, at the same time offering insight into anthroposophy, and new understandings of it.

Mario Betti was born in Lucca, Italy, in 1942. Following studies and work in Italy, Germany, Spain, Switzerland and England, he settled in Germany. He studied Waldorf pedagogy and subsequently worked for many years as a teacher of English, history, history of art and religion. From 1985 to 2001 he was a lecturer in pedagogical anthropology, history of art and anthroposophy at Alanus University, Alfter, near Bonn, and was an art teaching advisor to Waldorf schools. From 2001 to 2006 he was a lecturer at the Waldorf teacher training course in Stuttgart. Mario has published various books on literature and spiritual science.

Four blind men are trying to decide what an elephant is.

They each feel and touch the elephant, clearly a patient creature, and thereupon each gives his view:

'A pipe', says the first, touching the trunk.

'A wall', says the second, feeling its side.

'A whip', says the third, feeling its tail.

'A tree', says the fourth, who has got hold of a leg.

Old legend

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Foreword

Robert McDermott and Matthew T. Segall

Rudolf Steiner was one of the twentieth century's few true Renaissance men. While modern science, art, religion, politics and philosophy continued to fall into increasing specialisation, fragmentation, deconstruction and narrow-minded conflict, Steiner laboured tirelessly to create new integral approaches to education, agriculture, medicine, architecture, social reform, banking, visual and performance art, esotericism and more – all inspired by a deep commitment to humanity's spiritual potential. Mario Betti, a lifelong practitioner of Steiner's anthroposophical method, has written a book that succeeds not only in its clear interpretation of a sometimes enigmatic thinker's ideas, but in its brilliant amplifications and applications of these ideas to our present-day circumstances.

Betti offers his book as a stimulus or seed to support the growth of a still-fledgling pluralistic society. Achieving a planetary humanity guided by freedom and love out of the ashes of the modern pathologies of fascism, totalitarianism, nationalism, oligarchism and terrorism (the list goes on…) will require more than a shallow, relativistic multiculturalism that settles for mere tolerance. Betti draws on Goethe to remind us that *tolerance can only be a temporary position*. Genuine pluralism, Betti demonstrates, requires more than toleration: it requires a willingness to engage the whole of our being in deep communication with, and mutual affirmation of, other worldviews. We must strive to reach across our differences through an inner development that is capable of seeing their holistic interdependence. Betti's amplification of Steiner's twelve worldviews is a profound aid in this effort of inner development. Significantly, it shows the dignity and merit of each way of seeing the world at the same time as revealing the danger of exclusivism. *Every worldview becomes false, the moment it claims to be the whole of the world*.

Albert William Levy's *Philosophy and the Modern World*, a particularly expert and readable account of twentieth-century philosophies, summarises our present situation well:

> … philosophical movements of the recent past are to be viewed as waves of successive reform beating upon an infinite shore, with each group of partisans committed to a conception of philosophy which assures them a virtual monopoly of its legitimate practice.… And to pragmatists, logical empiricists, and linguistic analysts alike, any alternative conception of what philosophy is rests upon a tragic mistake.

Who would dare an attempt to overcome such differences of opinion, each supported by knowledge and powerful arguments? An ideal candidate would be a teacher whose thinking is lifted by creative pedagogy and artistic imagination. Mario Betti would appear to be such a teacher. Every page of this book reveals an author who teaches thinking as a contribution to individual lives, to relationships and to a sane society. He is invested not in scoring philosophical points but rather in helping his readers cope with intellectual confusion and conflict.

Betti succeeds in his purpose by giving a positive account of twelve worldviews. He takes as his model Goethe, who held in one view both universal harmony and plurality (p. 3). We are led to appreciate that each worldview is convincing up to a point. His treatment of Idealism, for example, invites the reader to see that all reality is, or at least emerges from, ideas – from a realm that Plato described so convincingly. But then Betti draws on Aristotle, an equally brilliant and equally influential philosopher, to show the need for a more positive account of particulars, whether moments, thoughts or objects. Betti refers to this combination of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy as Realism, the philosophy that occupies the top-most spot on the philosophical compass (more on this below).

In a similar way – the way of showing polarities – Betti makes a case for Rationalism, the philosophy of ethical order and proportion, and then shows how it virtually solicits its polar complement, the philosophy of Dynamism: structure needs process to be effective; and process, in order to avoid chaos, needs structure. As an introvert needs at least a little extroversion to get through the day, and as melancholic and phlegmatic temperaments need at least a touch of choleric and sanguine temperaments, so does Psychism, a philosophy ready-made for psychology, need a little Phenomenalism, a philosophy that emphasizes the reality of external

objects and events but is not sufficiently affirmative of the interior depths of the soul. 'Psychism is the inner version of phenomenalism' (p. 95). These pairs, furthermore, are not only complementary, as in two static halves that make a whole; rather, they need and benefit each other but also oppose each other – like individual and community, inner and outer, and of course, like gender. The twelve views are also like gender in that they exist not only as pairs of clearly demarcated opposites but as a spectrum with fluid boundaries, a perspective that contemporary social justice movements have made increasingly clear (p. 115).

In addition to an emphasis on the conflict of worldviews, Betti emphasizes the importance of mutually enhancing polarities: 'Each worldview is both a genuine opposite and an enhancement of its opposite' (p. 95). By plunging downward into the domain of gravity, the Materialist worldview has produced marvels of human understanding like the periodic table of elements, just as the 'Spiritualist' worldview has revealed its own '"levitating" periodic table of spiritual elements': the angelic hierarchies (p. 130). While Materialism risks digging itself ever deeper into the sand like a crab, 'Spiritualism' (see note, in p. 15) risks fleeing the Earth entirely. Such polar tensions are the engine of the evolutionary adventure that has produced all that we see around us and feel within us.

As was mentioned above, despite insisting on the equal value of each of the twelve views, Betti follows Steiner in giving pride of place to Realism. 'All worldviews rest like a bud within [it]', as it is '*the* fundamental human outlook *par excellence*' (p. 173). 'Cognition', Steiner tells us in his autobiography, 'is not the depiction of intrinsic being but rather the soul living its way into this intrinsic being' (quoted by Betti on p. 180). In other words, an act of knowing is not an internal mental representation of an external physical world; rather, knowing is a participatory event that is immanent to the world-process itself. 'If knowledge did not exist', Steiner continues, 'the world would remain incomplete' (quoted by Betti on p. 181). This is obviously not a *naïve* realism: it is a higher realisation rooted in Steiner's participatory approach to knowledge and reality.

This higher or participatory Realism is a developmental culmination of the other eleven worldviews, whereby through a sort of alchemical transfiguration, the distinct capacities of thinking, feeling, sensing and willing (each emphasised by their respective worldviews) are etherialized into what Betti calls 'a new earth substance' (p. 183). In this primordial etheric life substance, Betti tells us, the opposition between spirit and matter is overcome so that human consciousness can be raised and transubstantiated by the power of the Logos-Christ.

Some readers may have trouble following Betti and Steiner at this point, as these are rather mysterious matters, to say the least. But Betti's book succeeds at least in leading all spiritually striving individuals to the point where they are able to perceive the intrinsic value of all worldviews. At that point, it is up to each of us to discover the true integral potential of our human existence. 'The whole world, apart from the human being, is an enigma,' Steiner tells us. '*And the human being is its solution*'.

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4 February 2019

Introduction

Kathelijne Drenth

You are about to embark on a journey with Mario Betti's *Twelve Ways of Seeing the World* which may well change your life as much as it did mine.

My journey started when Herbert Wolpert, an organisational development consultant colleague, heard that I was involved in the development of a holistic framework for organisations based on twelve different perspectives. These were inspired by Rudolf Steiner's descriptions of twelve archetypal worldview philosophies in his book *Human and Cosmic Thought*. Herbert suggested that I should contact his business partner Albrecht Hemming, who had recently made a presentation titled 'Zwölf Wege Mensch und Welt zu Verstehen', or 'Twelve Ways of Understanding People and the World'. Albrecht sent me his script, and in it I came across a reference to Betti's book. I bought it, at the time available only in German, and devoured it.

Betti describes twelve different worldviews, from idealism to realism, and from spiritual will to material embodiment. He explains and anchors each worldview within a twelvefold constellation of the different perspectives of a comprehensive range of philosophers.

What becomes very clear is that throughout history no one philosopher can claim to have identified the 'absolute' truth. Rather, it is evident that advocating only one philosophy to the exclusion all others will give one a severely limited and very partial view of the world. No one perspective is more important or more crucial than any of the others; and not only are they equally important, they also complement each other seamlessly, all mutually reinforcing one another. Philosophy is usually presented as a battlefield of ideas, with each school struggling to claim the one true crown. Betti's suggestion is that all schools contribute, each offering within the whole one particular genius that illuminates that philosophical perspective, but together all twelve perspectives cohere to present one all-embracing and inclusive big picture of the whole.

Betti suggests that those twelve perspectives collectively embrace every possible worldview of which the human mind is capable, each one of which comprises one crucial dimension of our whole cognition. We all 'sit' within the constellation of those twelve perspectives. And even though we may be committed to one particular philosophical perspective and contest all others, our capability nevertheless spans all twelve, whether we are conscious of that or not. To optimally exploit our full systemic potential we need to recognise and engage not only with every single one of those perspectives but also with their collective totality.

Betti introduces the reader to revelatory insights, paths and developmental understandings that explain, embrace and explore that bigger whole constellation. His book invites us to engage and connect with all twelve worldview perspectives, and asks us to make the effort to understand them both individually and as a whole. The fact is that if we want to really master what it is that brings coherence to us as a whole, whether as individuals, groups, organisations or even nations, we need not only to master all twelve worldviews but also to grasp their *collective* integration within one overall picture. They enable us not only to see the whole expanse and potential of our capability, but also to *experience and act* that wholeness, knowing ourselves as *one* in our unique striving to bring value into the world and to give meaning to our life.

Had it not been for this profoundly transformative book, I would not have recognised, properly begun to understand and increasingly to trust the cohesive power of the framework of twelve leadership domains that my colleagues and I introduce in our work in organisations. I was working with the board of a multinational company back in 2008 in one of our first client cases using this framework for the purpose of defining an organisation's uniqueness. Then, at a certain moment, something magical happened, as if they had collectively found the 'holy grail' of their organisation. All of their differences, whether in their perspectives, professional background, individual capability or personality, suddenly appeared to be essential to guiding the successful striving of the bigger whole. The board was experienced by its members as one team, with a shared overarching intent and commitment to the core – the who, what, why and how of their whole organisation. This same phenomenon has emerged within all of the client boards with whom we have worked since then.

What is very clearly demonstrated by our experience with working in all kinds of organisations facing a variety of developmental questions is that the twelve worldviews work as *ordering principles*, creatively applicable within any and every situation. Engaging with this twelve-fold framework

enables groups both to clarify what brings them together and to move forward as one integrated whole. Acting within their shared twelve worldviews, they can connect with the collective meaning of the whole organisation, which they experience as one uniquely differentiated whole. And the worldviews work equally with individuals; enabling the comprehension of the whole of our own unique capability, each of us can likewise begin to experience ourselves as complete, powerful and fully integrated in the world.

All of the twelve worldviews lie within each and every one of us, by virtue of our common human condition. Some are more dominant than others, but all have a key role to play. Engaging seriously with the awareness-raising process that Betti invites in this book empowers all of us to deal more confidently and constructively with the world we live in today.

Framing one's understanding of the world within the twelve perspectives is extraordinarily powerful, inspiring and transformative. It is that experience that has encouraged the Cloverleaf Foundation to bring Mario Betti's beautiful and masterful book to an English-speaking readership.

The Foundation has funded the translation from the original German. We are delighted with the outcome, with many thanks to the outstanding translator Matthew Barton. We are also very happy to be collaborating with Martin Large, publisher of Hawthorn Press. And Mario Betti has been a pillar of strength and encouragement throughout what has been a long and often challenging process. From our very first contact almost ten years ago our relationship has been nothing but inspiring and dear, and I thank him deeply for the meaning his work has had for my own life and work.

I wish you a wonderful journey in reading this inspiring book. Enjoy!

Kathelijne Drenth, Chair, Cloverleaf Foundation,
Netherlands. www.cloverleaffoundation.com

Note: Study Guide for Individuals and Groups

At the end of this book you will find a Study Guide that Mario and I have compiled for the English edition. The purpose of this guide is to facilitate individual study and also group study. A version is also available in German, which can be downloaded from www.cloverleaffoundation.com.

Foreword to the 2001 German Edition

Mario Betti

This book is an attempt to present twelve worldviews that offer twelve different ways of understanding ourselves and the world we live in. Each can gradually help us to penetrate secrets of the human being and the cosmos, since, in the words of Goethe's Faust, they together embody 'what makes the world most inwardly cohere'.

First and foremost, especially in regard to our currently developing multicultural society, the book aims to stimulate new ways of thinking, rather than just being a compendium of worldviews or an historical outline of philosophical ideas. Where the context requires it, the book draws equally on science, art and religion, and in the process it will become apparent that Goethe's whole oeuvre was ultimately a striking realisation of the 'huge undertaking' to which he referred when looking back at his unfinished poem, 'The Mysteries', in which he had wanted to give artistic expression to twelve outlooks on the world.

Moreover, the universalist approach of Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy also develops naturally and fittingly into a study of twelve worldviews.

This book is the result of over 20 years of study and research, and owes much to the many generations of students at Alanus University, near Bonn, Germany, who repeatedly urged me to write it. At the start of every year, I spend several days speaking about the twelve worldviews to each new group of students. I offer my warmest thanks to them, and to the colleagues who have worked alongside me.

My special thanks go to the Hausser and Mahle Foundations, without whose kind support this book would not have seen the light of day so quickly.

Mario Betti

21 March 2001

1

Goethe's 'The Mysteries', and Today's Multicultural Society

And so without delay take hold
Of sacred, open secret, and behold.
From Goethe's poem 'Epirrhema'

If this poem had been published in full 30 years ago, when it was conceived and begun, it would have come somewhat ahead of its times. And today, although ideas have developed since then, feelings have purified and views have grown more enlightened, the reader may perhaps be glad to see in poetic garb what has, in the mean time, come to general acknowledgement, and thereby find an affirmation of views which alone can bring contentment and peace to each person upon his personal Mont-Serrat.[1]

Goethe was already 67 when he published these words in 1816, in the *Morgenblatt* (*Morning News*). Addressed to 'a society of young students', his aim was to affirm the plan and purpose of 'The Mysteries', a poem that he had never completed. He had started it in 1784, very shortly before his 35th birthday, and written the poem 'as it stands… quickly, and all at once'. For nine months Goethe kept trying to return to it, but on 28 March 1785 he wrote to Knebel to say that 'the undertaking is too huge for my capacities'.[2] The work had faltered, and was never picked up again.

What is this 'affirmation' about? Mont-Serrat, a rocky, almost isolated mountain range in Catalonia, today much frequented by pilgrims and tourists, has been linked in diverse ways with the Grail tradition.[3] In 1800,

Goethe himself had received an account from Wilhelm von Humboldt of hermitages in the mountains of northern Spain, later to be his inspiration for the figures of the holy Fathers in the last scene of *Faust*. In retrospect he connects this mountain with the one in 'The Mysteries': it becomes for him a symbol of an 'ideal Montserrat' where each person can affirm the views and outlooks that can give him or her 'happiness and tranquillity'.

What kind of happiness? What kind of tranquillity?

The poem describes how a young priest, Brother Marcus, one evening comes in his travels to a quiet valley, to a monastery where he is invited to enter. Over the gateway of the monastery is a 'cross thick-woven with roses'. Goethe describes the situation as follows: Brother Marcus 'finds there twelve knights who, after the tumult and travails of lives full of exertion, suffering and danger, have taken a vow to live here and quietly serve God. A thirteenth, whom they acknowledge as their superior, is on the point of departing from them.' Brother Marcus is now welcomed most warmly, and led into a hall.

> Here was no ornament to distract the eyes,
> A daring cross-vault rose aloft
> And by the walls stood thirteen chairs
> Arranged in a ring, as for a pious choir,
> Each gracefully carved by able hands;
> Before each chair there stood a little desk.
> You had a sense of reverence everywhere,
> And peace, and sociability together.

This mysterious brotherhood is gathered around a figure named Humanus, described as the archetype of true humanity, and someone who has the ability to act as a mediator between them. Goethe described the twelve as representatives of the 'most diverse modes of thought and feeling', or in other words as belonging to very different worldviews or religions. They are people who, while strictly maintaining each one's inner freedom, seek harmony between their different perspectives. Thus, Humanus is at the centre of a world of thought and feeling conceived in universal terms. From their master, the twelve have learned the kind of tolerance in which, despite differing professions of faith, they can live harmoniously together, complementing and enhancing each other. They had all felt 'a resemblance with and sympathy for him', and now, 'after long living together, Humanus could depart from them since his spirit was embodied in them all, belonged to all, and no longer needed earthly raiment'. The young

pilgrim, who has been sent to them by divine direction, is now to become the master of this brotherhood as the earthly representative of Humanus.

The core message of this poem, in Goethe's own words, is this:

> If, after this outline, the listener, the participant, is then led in spirit through all lands and times, everywhere experiencing the most joyous things that the love of God and man brings forth in so many different forms, this should give rise to the most pleasant sense in which the aberrations, malpractices or distortions of which every religion is sometimes accused in certain epochs nowhere become manifest. If this whole enactment takes place in the week of Easter, and the chief symbol of this community is a cross inwoven with roses, it is easy to envisage that the eternal preservation of higher human conditions will have also been revealed here, in consoling fashion, at the point when Humanus departs.

'And so without delay take hold / of sacred, open mystery, and behold' are words we might, in view of the above, gladly call out to our contemporaries. For it is true to say that the human qualities in human beings – which Goethe symbolised so profoundly in the figure of Humanus – struggle to see the light of day in our era. And it is indeed difficult, given the wealth of outlooks and perspectives on God, nature, history, etc. which live in our developing multicultural society, to imagine the possibility of true connection with each other, let alone to grasp the idea that they – in their archetypal qualities – are part of one all-embracing whole. Goethe, with his universalising outlook, *was* able to conceive of a cosmos of twelve different 'modes of thinking and feeling', not only in terms of religion. And he also recognised why, unlike Eckermann for instance, he never demanded that human beings should 'harmonise' into one and the same outlook. On 2 May 1824 he said to Eckermann:

> I have always regarded a person only as a self-contained individual whom I sought to understand, and with whose particularity I endeavoured to acquaint myself, without demanding from him any further sympathy. By this means I have now become able to relate to every human being, and through this alone arises a knowledge of manifold characters as well as a necessary adroitness in life. You see, especially when one encounters obstinate natures, one must get a grip upon oneself to get through to them, and by this means all the different aspects in us are enlivened and developed, so that one soon feels equal to every

> encounter…. You must venture forth into the greater world, whatever position you wish to adopt.[4]

About six years previously, in 1816, Goethe had written down the passage about 'The Mysteries' that we quoted above. The two statements should be seen in the same context. In his monograph on Goethe,[5] Rudolf Meyer is right to remark that this outlook is entirely in accord with the idea of tolerance that was at last making headway in the eighteenth century after fanatical denominational disputes had convulsed European culture for centuries. He goes on to write:

> But tolerance can also culminate in an unfruitful neutrality of view, one that makes no effort to engage with the specific and particular nature of a different stance. For this reason Goethe says: 'Tolerance should actually only be a temporary position: it must lead to recognition and acknowledgement. Sufferance signifies insult.' It is clear that this high ideal at the same time points to a developmental goal embracing all human society and the community of nations.

In this sense this core concern of Goethe's, seen now in sociological terms, offers a deeper view of what is nowadays called 'the multicultural society', in so far as its goal – with all diversity of languages, traditions, religious confessions, values and lifestyles – is a community of human beings founded on tolerance and acknowledgement. The two cornerstones of such a society are no doubt a culture of dialogue – including dispute – and a new kind of introspection. Whereas the latter can first provide us with insight into our bodily, psychological and cultural or spiritual identity, the former gives us deeper acquaintance with the other.

But Goethe goes still further than this – and here we can see how far ahead of his time he was, his very specific vision becoming apparent from his unusual view of 'Easter Sunday', which displays a truly cosmopolitan outlook. In relation to 'The Mysteries', Rudolf Meyer writes of this:

> The figure of Humanus who, under the sign of the Rose Cross, gathers round him the representatives of all religious and cultural streams and can unite them in true fraternity, seeks to offer this outlook of a future, inter- and supra-denominational Christianity.[6]

It could of course be objected that Goethe was simply Goethe, and nowadays is nowadays; that everywhere we witness war and conflict between

people, worldviews, racisms, nationalisms and fundamentalisms. At the same time, society has fallen under the sway of increasing connectivity and globalisation – or in other words a levelling of all conditions, which is really only a variation on the rule of power prevalent from ancient times. And then too, ultimately, it might be said, world society is slowly but surely heading towards its dissolution: a clash of cultures is imminent, rather than a global 'round table'. These widespread views about our contemporary world have partial justification. And yet more and more round tables *are* coming into being, corrupt, inhumane political systems, and power blocks are crumbling and humanity is increasingly struggling through to greater unity. Reality is of course not a gigantic woodcut with fixed areas of light and dark, but rather a developing landscape that each and everyone can help to shape, the smallholder as much as powerful politicians.

We are concerned here also with an awareness of our potential freedom, and spiritual and social capacities. This is a creative process. We need to dig in with the will. Hegel says this:

> Development is… tough, reluctant work against oneself; and moreover it is not merely the formal nature of development in a general sense but the bringing forth of a purpose with specific content. This purpose is one we determined upon from the beginning: it is the mind and spirit, and accords with their true nature, the idea of freedom. This is the founding and thus also the governing principle of development, through which it gains sense and meaning.[7]

And 'World history, as has been previously determined, embodies the development of the spirit's consciousness of freedom, and the realisation or implementation produced by such consciousness.'[8]

Here, where the individual as such is involved, we can of course offer no fixed prognoses. But it is enough to recognise that human beings can shape world history in a humane way if they are moved to act. Related to our theme, the realisation of the mind or spirit, which Hegel postulates so urgently, can also consist of enlarging our own view of things in scientific, artistic, social and religious dimensions, so that the full reality of life increasingly becomes the reality we experience. The world reveals its riches to us to the degree that we possess organs to perceive it. Thus we need not only to revise our views but to furnish our mind in a more comprehensive way. It is a matter not simply of replacing one theory with a 'better' one, but of justified diversity when considering any set of circumstances.

In this context, Thomas Kuhn's essay on the structure of scientific revolutions is extremely apposite. Without discussing the ultimate unity of diverse worldviews, he shows how absolutist claims to truth are untenable. He applies the familiar definition of 'paradigm' – as a model and standard according to which experience can be compared and evaluated – in particular to the basic views that hold sway in an academic or scientific discipline at any one time, testing them chiefly in respect of subject and methodology. The paradigm establishes what can be regarded as a scientifically satisfactory solution, and what questions can be seen as allowable. Kuhn's thesis is that 'revolutions' – in the sense of changes of paradigm – continually arise in the history of science, and that scientific theories relating to particular fields cannot be compared with one another because of the paradigms upon which they are founded; thus they are 'incommensurable'. And, since the concepts used, such as space, time and mass, have different significance in, say, Newton's or Einstein's view of mechanics, they are also irreconcilable. Here is a passage from his book that brings the debate in this realm right up to date:

> We will therefore take as proven that the contradictions between successive paradigms are as necessary as they are irreconcilable. And can we then say more clearly what kinds of opposition these are? The most noticeable kind has already been cited several times. Successive paradigms tell us various things about what exists in the universe and how it behaves. That is, they deviate from each other in questions such as the existence of subatomic particles, the materiality of light and the conservation of heat or energy. These are the essential differences between successive paradigms, and they require no further explanation. Paradigms, however, differ in more than substance, for they relate not only to nature but also reflect back on the science that produced them. They are the source of all methods, problem areas and solution norms as these are acknowledged at any time by a mature scientific community. In turn this means that adoption of a new paradigm often requires a new definition of the science in question. Various old problems can be diverted to a different field or be declared completely 'unscientific'. Others in turn, which did not previously exist, or were entirely insignificant, can, with the arrival of a new paradigm, become a primary type of important scientific achievement. And in the same way that the problems change, so also the norm which distinguishes a truly scientific solution from mere metaphysical speculation, wordplay or mathematical gimmickry. The normative scientific tradition that arises from

> a scientific revolution is not only irreconcilable with the past but often, indeed, incommensurable.[9]

The paradigms themselves are thus not worldviews as such but, as already suggested, more like ordering principles, models of explanation in the context of an already fairly well-developed worldview such as materialism or mathematism.

An outlook close to our own position here is that of Neil Postman, who has come to prominence in recent years with his works of cultural critique. In his book *The End of Education*, which was published in 1995, he writes as follows:

> Educators may bring upon themselves unnecessary travail by taking a tactless and unjustifiable position about the relation between scientific and religious narratives.
>
> We see this, of course, in the conflict concerning creation science. Some educators representing, as they think, the conscience of science act much like those legislators who in 1925 prohibited by law the teaching of evolution in Tennessee. In that case, anti-evolutionists were fearful that a scientific idea would undermine religious belief. Today, proevolutionists are fearful that a religious idea will undermine scientific belief. The former had insufficient confidence in religion; the latter insufficient confidence in science. The point is that profound but contradictory ideas may exist side by side, if they are constructed from different materials and methods and have different purposes. Each tells us something important about where we stand in the universe, and it is foolish to insist that they must despise each other.[10]

Cultural commentator Hartmut Böhme highlights a different aspect of the whole issue. In an article in the periodical *Die Zeit*,[11] on the theme of bio-sciences and the tasks of cultural studies, he expresses ideas that once again underline the topicality of the attempt, undertaken here, to survey a range of different worldviews and their interrelationship. This also offers further proof of the modernity of Goethe's vision.

> Since modern science and technology existed, nature and humankind have been overrun by ever-new models of monopolistic explanation. At a time when the cosmos seemed to be created in the image of a clock, everything from the smallest living entity, through humankind, to the heavens was explained in terms of mechanics and machines. Whereas

at one time circulation was seen as the principle governing both the blood and the motions of the planets, at another an infinitesimal mathematics made it possible to enumerate the world from its smallest creature to the infinite universe. With the discovery of electromagnetism it seemed we had found the energy responsible for the life of animal and human organisms as well as the order of the universe. Darwinism enchanted thinkers with its thesis of the genetic mechanisms of selection regulating all life. The theory of relativity, and quantum theory, explained physical structures from elementary particles through to the macrocosm, but was at the same time also adapted as a model of society and history.

Today the 'life sciences' have taken on the mantle of such universal generalisations and euphoric promises of salvation. History teaches that these great claims are always followed by repudiations. It is therefore to be suspected that even scientists who at present flock to the banner of what is rather immodestly called 'life science' will eventually realise that they have not actually understood 'life' at all, and will be succeeded by other claimants to the forefront of knowledge. But let us not wait until this happens, for the assertion that the bio-sciences are 'sciences of life' demands scientific, political and cultural responses right now.

These examples, only a few of the many that could be cited, testify to the willingness of alert contemporaries to depart from the narrow and linear paths of reductionism and come to a universally human, multi-layered worldview. Or to put it another way: more or less consciously there is a growing willingness for creative self-realisation as Hegel understood it, and an all-embracing humanity as Goethe described.

2

The Twelve Worldviews: What Is Meant by Them

Since Kant introduced the word 'worldview' into philosophical discussion, it has assumed many different shades of meaning. In his *Critique of Judgement*, Kant uses it to refer to a subjective summary of the world multiply grasped by the senses. Max Scheler, on the other hand, characterises 'worldview' as

> A mode of selection and categorisation that holds sway over a whole cultural milieu or a person, assimilating *de facto* the pure truths of physical, psychological and ideal things irrespective of whether and how it either does or does not reflexively know this.[12]

Scheler died in 1928. A contemporary of his, Rudolf Steiner, goes a step further in seeing 'worldview' as real ontology by connecting it more strongly both to the human being and the cosmos. In his lecture of 21 January 1914,[13] Steiner initially tackles questions of the universality of thinking, and the dangers of one-sided perceptions. 'If one seeks to form any idea of thinking at all,' he says, one must be clear 'that the truth of a thought in its particular field does not yet tell us anything about its *general* validity. A thought can certainly be correct in its field but this has no bearing on its general validity.' He continues by emphasising 'that one-sidedness is the greatest enemy of all worldviews and should be avoided at all costs'. People such as Kuhn, Postman and Böhme would very likely agree with him here.

In the lecture, Steiner then goes on to outline twelve justified worldviews, in a sense as universal categories of outlook, though of course

without entertaining a shallow pluralism. He is describing an organism of worldviews – that is, of perceptions of the principles that constitute the world and the human being. In the words of Faust, once again, he is examining 'what makes the world most inwardly cohere'. Steiner, though, summarises as follows:

> Between these worldviews we can conceive of others too, but they are only subtly different from the ones I have described, and can be assigned to the chief types. If we seek to acquaint ourselves with the fabric of the world, we have to recognise that we come to know it through these twelve gateways.

The *Brockhaus Encyclopaedia* identifies around 90 worldviews current today. Based on the relevant literature – including Dilthey, Jaspers and Spranger – it states: 'Insofar as worldviews seek completeness, they must include characterisations of the human being and the world, and views about value, life and morality.'[14] This statement relativises the scientific validity of worldviews in that they are 'interpretative outlooks in the form of personal convictions about the fundamental structure, modality and function of the whole world'. But then it states, somewhat more authoritatively, that,

> Today, distinctions made according to the six most important governing principles take precedence over any worldview. These are: the individual (for instance, humanism), the community (for instance, socialism), the future (life of future generations, utopian ideals), omnipotence (for instance, religions), action (for instance, materialism, anarchism), reality (for instance, pragmatism, monism). Many worldviews are currently in a crisis of coherence and relevance, which has led to the tendency to form 'private worldviews' composed of fragments of the most diverse outlooks. Orders of value founded on individual motivations and orientations become personally meaningful views of life. The need for 'cultural belonging' remains, however, in the form of universal explanations, as support and assistance in dealing with life, especially in 'borderline situations'.

Now Steiner's position – like that of the present author – is not a relativistic one. The twelvefold character, taken as a whole, supplies not merely some 'personal conviction', but rather a harmony of comprehensible worldviews, which separately and together give us what we could call a manifestation

of the truth about the world and the human being. Just as we can see a house, a mountain and – of course – an elephant (see the Indian fable on p. iii) very differently, depending on our particular perspective, so also, in the sense of Steiner, we can see the 'fabric of the world'. The number twelve is no more 'mystical' than the six governing principles to which the *Brockhaus Encyclopaedia* refers, or the numbers three, four, five and seven which we encounter repeatedly in phenomena of nature, astronomy or cultural history.[15] From an epistemological perspective, and given the fact that the mesh size of a net is what determines the size of fish that will be caught, we have to resort to the full scope of our cognitive capacities if we are gradually to delve into the domain of truth. The 'whole truth' is comparable to an ocean. We swim close to the beach and cannot therefore encompass the ocean's whole scope, but we *are* already in the water and can swim out ever further. It is only important to know that there are other 'shores' from which to embark for the open sea. The problem of worldviews does not primarily lie in their irreconcilability but in the one-sidedness and exclusivity they can manifest.

More than almost any other of his contemporaries, Rudolf Steiner sought strenuously for a multiplicity of outlooks. Born in Kraljevec (modern Croatia) in 1861, he studied sciences in Vienna and was awarded a doctorate in philosophy in Rostock. After he had embarked on editing Goethe's scientific writings as part of Kürschner's 'German Literature' editions, he was employed at the Goethe and Schiller Archive in Weimar. In both Vienna and Weimar, and later, around the turn of the century in Berlin, he moved in the most varied circles. His research increasingly enabled him to comprehend both the material and the spiritual aspect of the world in a *single* process of cognition, and this was to form the basis of the anthroposophy that he later founded. In relation to this, looking back a few months before his death, he said of his book *Philosophy of Freedom*, published in 1894:

> In my book I sought to show that nothing unknown *lies behind* the sense world, but that the world of spirit is *within* it. And I tried to demonstrate that the human world of ideas exists in this spiritual world. Thus the reality of the sensory world is hidden from the human mind only for as long as the soul perceives *only* through the senses. When we experience the ideas that complement sense perceptions, our consciousness experiences the sense world in its objective reality. Cognition is not a reflection of reality but a process in which the soul finds its way into it. Within consciousness occurs an advance from an as yet inessential

> sense world to its essence. Thus the sense world only remains 'phenomenon' or appearance while the mind has not yet fathomed it fully. In truth the sense world is therefore spiritual world too; and the soul lives at one with this perceived world of spirit by extending consciousness to encompass it. The goal of the process of cognition is conscious experience of the spiritual world, in the sight of which everything resolves into spirit.[16]

This experience is one that draws on and existentially requires the whole human being's thinking, feeling and intent. And thus Steiner says:

> The world is full of enigmas. Cognition seeks to understand it. But mostly it tries to offer a thought content as solution to any riddle. But riddles – as I said to myself – are *not solved by thoughts*. These direct the soul towards solutions but do not themselves contain them. An enigma arises in the actual world, and exists there as a phenomenon; and so its solution must also arise *in reality*. Some essence or occurrence appears which embodies the solution to another. And so I said to myself: the whole world, apart from the human being, is an enigma, the world riddle if you like; and the *human being is its solution*. … Human beings do not *create* the content of knowledge *for themselves,* but, with their soul, they offer the stage or setting where the world first comes to a partial experience of its existence and development. Without human knowledge, the world would remain incomplete.[17]

This is an extraordinarily keen conclusion which can lead us, already in close study of *The Philosophy of Freedom*, to a personal–transpersonal experience. For Steiner himself this increasingly intensified process of cognition went hand in hand with a social and existential embrace of different worldviews, as he experienced these in diverse friends and interlocutors.

It is important to become aware of this aspect of his endeavour and research. It is central to this book, which is founded on similar experience. While the chief focus here is on finding paths of deeper communication and mutual affirmation between people, at the same time there are pointers here – for each person can only experience this for themselves – that I and world, human being and cosmos, can grow together. Intensive engagement with the founding motifs of the twelve worldviews can in fact become a grand boulevard towards this goal.

In his unfinished *Autobiography*, from which the passages above are taken, Steiner writes sentences that must certainly be regarded in this light. They relate to his time in Weimar, during which he was 'in the liveliest discourse' with many different people:

> I liked visiting Suphan, and I liked visiting Hartleben. Suphan never went to see Hartleben, nor Hartleben Suphan. Neither could engage with the other's way of thinking and feeling. But I felt immediately at home with both of them. Yet neither Suphan nor Hartleben ever came to visit me properly. When they did visit, they stayed as it were at home. In spirit I did not experience them as visiting me. I saw the most diverse worldviews inwardly before me: the scientific, the idealistic, and many shades between. I felt the urge to engage with them, to move within them.[18]

Then:

> In this way I did not live without spiritual dangers and difficulties. Those who reject anything that does not conform with their way of thinking are not under pressure from the relative justifications of different outlooks. They can feel unreservedly the fascinating aspect of what has been thought in a particular 'school of thought'. This intellectual fascination lives in many people. They can easily deal with a thinking different from their own. But if you have a world of *visions, views, of tangible perceptions,* as the spiritual mode of enquiry *inevitably* does, you *see* the justification of different 'standpoints'; and you have to continually defend yourself inwardly against being too strongly drawn to the one or the other.[19]

And:

> This was an apt soul exercise, which life itself presented me with in order to get beyond the abstract either–or of rational judgement. *This* kind of judgement erects inward barriers to the supersensible world, which is not one whose realities and occurrences allow such binary alternatives. One has to become manifold and versatile in relation to supersensible reality. Theoretical learning is not enough; one must make it a habitual practice, right into the soul's inmost responses, to regard everything from the most diverse perspectives. 'Standpoints' such as materialism, realism, idealism, spirituality – which people with an abstract focus

> develop in the physical world into extensive theories in order to add significance to things themselves – lose all interest for the supersensible seer. The latter knows, for instance, that materialism can only be a view of the world from the perspective in which it appears in material garb…. No doubt it was the spirit of Goethe, so prevalent everywhere in Weimar, that made a certain aspect of my experience of what happened there into a practical soul exercise in adequate description of supersensible worlds.[20]

In 1897, Steiner moved from Weimar to Berlin. Developing anthroposophy there as a 'path of knowledge that seeks to lead the spirit in the human being to the spirit in the cosmos',[21] he may well have expected that the spark of keen engagement with different worldviews would kindle in a great many hearts. He gave the lectures on the twelve worldviews, referred to earlier, in 1914 in Berlin, for the Anthroposophical Society founded in 1912–13. There he explained:

> There is not only *one* worldview that can be defended, that is legitimate, but twelve. And it has to be admitted that there are just as many good reasons for one worldview as for every other of the twelve. The world cannot be regarded from the one-sided outlook of *one* worldview, one thought, but reveals itself only to those who know that one must circumnavigate it. Just as, in the Copernican worldview, the sun passes through the signs of the zodiac, shining upon the earth from twelve different regions, so likewise we should not position ourselves upon a single standpoint – that, say, of idealism, sensualism, phenomenalism or any other outlook that can be named – but instead, we should be able to encircle the world and live our way into the twelve different perspectives from which the world can be regarded.[22]

As far as I can tell, this seed did not produce copious fruits, either in the public domain or within the anthroposophic movement. I am referring here not just to the immediate practical and social consequences of such an outlook, but also the further dissemination and development of the twelve worldviews to which Steiner makes only passing reference. These are:

> Phenomenalism
> Sensualism
> Materialism

Mathematism
Rationalism
Idealism
Psychism
Pneumatism
'Spiritualism'*
Monadism
Dynamism
Realism

[*Translator's note*: The terms 'spiritualism' and 'spiritualist' could easily be confused with the 'spiritualist' movement, with which it has next to nothing in common. It refers, rather, to a 'spiritual' mode of apprehending reality. When the term is used in the text, it is placed in quotation marks to indicate this crucial difference.]

An exception here is the philosopher and historian Sigismund von Gleich, who in the 1940s wrote a work entitled *The Truth as Full Compass of All Worldviews*.[23] This is the wonderful outline of a history of philosophy and culture from ancient times to the twentieth century, from the perspective of the twelve worldviews. It is a work of grandeur, and the present book could not have been written without thorough study of it. I whole-heartedly recommend it for readers who would like to explore these themes further.

Given the multi-layered complexity of the theme, this book will aim to bring the core of each worldview into clear focus and see it in relation to the others. Each worldview is in a sense an 'archetypal phenomenon', an originating picture that can appear in many shades, as it were prismatically fragmented – fragmented as many times, in fact, as there are human beings. Each person is unique, their depths and heights beyond grasp. Nevertheless there are strong proponents of very specific worldviews, even if, of course, they are not entirely subsumed by their outlook.

It must therefore be a matter not of pigeonholing people in a cultural or spiritual context but of *understanding* them, and doing so *also* within the specific values and characteristics they lend to a certain worldview. Ultimately we can recall here the phrase of Empedocles, that only 'like perceives like'; or the telling phrase of J.G. Fichte: 'The philosophy one has shows what kind of person one is.'[24] If we now start from the assumption that this twelvefold source springs within human beings themselves, then every encounter with another, but also with nature around and above us,

will become an act of self-knowledge in a deeper sense. And the world will then always increasingly turn out to be constituted of, and pervaded by, the creative principles that manifest as a 'worldview' in any individual. In this case I as human being am the answer to the world's enigma.

The path highlighted here can therefore become a tangible stimulus for every open-minded contemporary individual, and a means increasingly to embrace a developing multicultural society, and to grow to be at one with the cosmos. Recalling Goethe's 'The Mysteries' we must say that Humanus in each of us is waiting to be born in our own, ideal Mont-Serrat, to work in socially practical ways for the humane progress of our culture.