

MIRRORS OF THE SOUL.

'*Simulacrum*' (I – IV) – 2022.

'*The Golden Flower [opus alchumicum]*' – 2023.

'*Circumambulatio [The golden flower] 1 & 2* – 2023.

"I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness."

[Max Planck, , co-founder of quantum theory]

In fact, insight always comes afterwards, because the mind can never keep up with, let alone be ahead of, the unconscious, and thus the process of creation. Everything grows with time. Although I have said and written extensively in the past about the use of convex and concave mirrors in my work*), I have never before been so adamant in asserting that, in my opinion, they may be taken without question as representations of the mind or of the 'self'. Whereas this was already implicitly the case in works such as, for instance, *Narayana is Everywhere, Apperception, Sohum* and *The Blind Leading The Blind* (1994-2021), in new works such as the *Simulacrum* series, *The Golden Flower* and *Circumambulatio*, this fact becomes downright explicit.

In this article, therefore, I want to delve deeper into this background, hoping to clarify to some extent concepts as commonplace as they are misunderstood, such as mind, soul and 'self'.



The Golden Flower [opus alchumicum] – 2023

MIRROR WORKS

Emptiness is the central 'feature'; more vessel (alchemy) than that which is contained. Dissolution of everything present, visibly concrete, or at least the inversion and 'inside-out' turning of the highly illusory but oh-so-tangible material. Either in a 'sculptural' or 'pictorial' sense. The distortion of the concave (concave) surface thus rather mirrors the *light* itself, the *space* itself, as a dynamic and organically ungraspable fluidity, which only takes place in the *now*, i.e. the moment of contemplation. The mirror here no longer functions in its function of symmetrical reflection of reality; a showing or 'pure' reflection of things as they apparently are. Not a faithful representation, but a world with its own laws, just like the unconscious, which can by no means be called lawless, irrational or 'just' chaotic, but has its own *modus operandi*.

ONE'S OWN SPACE

The equally psychological and existential 'self' constitutes the totality of the conscious and unconscious psyche. A totality that is, however, literally *immeasurable*. A pearl that all too easily escapes attention and is overlooked. Hence the parallel with the image of the 'insubstantial' or even 'invisible stone', the *lapis exilis*, from alchemy. The unconscious cannot be indicated at all what it is, for that it is rightfully the unconscious. No claims can therefore be made about its possible contents. Wholeness, or totality, is necessarily a transcendent concept for the conscious part of the mind. The 'self' is therefore a boundary concept; it is located beyond our 'grasp'. Nor can the 'self' be confined to the boundaries of the individual psyche, whose limits we do not know either. Presumably that is partly why modern thinkers with materialist leanings like Yuval Harari would prefer to delete such terms as 'soul' and 'self' altogether, which in fact amounts to the same thing as declaring the invisible non-existent.

"The limits of consciousness we may be able to indicate; the unconscious, however, is the unknown psychic beyond question" (Jung)

The 'self' as both boundary and transboundary totality is the self-activity of the soul striving back to unification, but on a higher plane of evolution after its fall of consciousness into this dual reality. This is what the paradise myth, among others, teaches us.



The Golden Flower [opus alchemicum], detail.

Back to the works and mirror pieces. The hollow form literally loses its focus by throwing itself outwards and turning itself inside out in all directions. This rightfully makes it a representation of the (creative) spirit, which is itself detached from all its manifestations. The amorphous and fluid character of the mirrored light also has a parallel in the alchemical conception of the *prima materia* (primordial matter) as a chaotic 'unformed mass', sometimes tough-liquid, pregnant with germs of life. If the mirror can be understood as the 'space' of the mind - which is itself without space or size - then a feather, leaf or butterfly in this space can thus perhaps be understood as an image of the soul.

To avoid too much juggling with all these so important concepts, the essential question naturally remains: what is the human being? Even the most inveterate materialist will have to admit that his physical body is literally animated, and in life-threatening situations *reanimation* is applied so that the life energy, carried by the blood, will not leave him. It is precisely this that is referred to by the term soul (Latin: *anima* = breath of life), and which makes man a living being. Without wanting to fall into dualism, the body as a form (the 'vessel' or retort)

is distinguished from the soul as the energy that literally 'animates' it. *Enerchei* in Greek means 'that which operates in/through...'. Although soul, mind and body form a unity and flow into each other, there are indeed fundamental distinctions between these 'categories' and the soul, as a *mediator* between mind and body, participates in both. More on this later.



Circumambulatio 1 [The golden flower] – 2023

'SOUL' OR 'SPIRIT', THAT'S OVER.

It is perhaps a bit wry to have to clarify these concepts, which should be among everyone's first and foremost life questions if we are to gain any insight into ourselves (*gnothi seauton*: know thyself) in the short stonde of time that the physical vehicle serves us. Unfortunately, its conception is mostly diluted to such an extent and even quite a few protagonists, in their blind hunger for physical immortality, look forward to the moment when man and machine merge; described by Ray Kurzweil as the point of 'singularity'. According to this promoter of transhumanism, "truly, at the end of the 21st century there will be no more death." Artificial intelligence, which we have all become quite familiar with by now thanks to the smart phone, is currently "linked to life extension; it is a *simulation* of the biological form" (Kurzweil). The programmed condition (*pro-grammein* in Greek literally means "prescribe") of the human mind can rightly be called a simulation compared to the original free mind before its fall from paradise (read; from unity). This is exactly what all bona fide spirituality has been trying to draw our attention to since time immemorial, in order to hopefully one day be able to break through this persistent programme in a moment of enlightenment where the soul fully recognises it-*self* (with apologies for the readability, but this goes really deep).

The simulation of Kurzweil and the *metaverse* (Zuckerberg, Musk et al), on the other hand, can rightly be seen as a simulation-within-a-simulation, with the image of virtual-reality games with google goggles and senses 'extended' by artificial intelligence clearly illustrating how humans can become definitively disconnected from themselves.

The aforementioned Israeli historian Yuval Harari believes that "the whole idea that humans have this 'soul' or 'spirit', that's over". According to him, thanks to the technological advances of transhumanism, we have now been promoted to "hackable animals", which involuntarily begs the question whether his mind has indeed not been hacked. The World Economic Forum (WEF) led by Klaus Schwab has managed to instruct and convert many international luminaries from politics and business through its Young Global Leaders School into the mouthpiece of this technocratic and purely materialistic ideology. In the accelerated process towards the "new man" - an imitation man oiled on smart technology following the Chinese example - Klaus Schwab, following Nietzsche, recently declared once again: "God is dead." For all those who might have apparently forgotten....

Today, the Prometheus man possessed by scientific ideology seems more haughty than ever. There is a total reversal of values (*Umwertung aller Werten*), which can hardly disguise the fact that above all 'worldly' conflicts there is a spiritual war going on against the soul of man. "A war that through diabolical technology, especially misuse of artificial intelligence and nanotechnology, seeks to erase the primal memory that we are spiritual light beings and that a great possibility of realisation lies hidden in our hearts: a luminous force without shadow. We are destined for timeless happiness!" is the message that the 'timeless' whistleblower Marcel Messing has been delivering for decades. Mostly in vain, although a turnaround in the hypnotised, mainstream media-indoctrinated masses is imminent.



Circumambulatio 1 [The golden flower] – 2023

SEELenfÜNKLEIN OR THE FORTRESS OF THE SOUL (ECKEHART)

Whether God "exists" or "does not exist" remains a difficult statement to verify, even though Prof. Amit Goswami stated some 15 years ago that quantum physics had provided the proof of God. God simply cannot be proved nor denied; science, by definition, is incapable of asserting anything with firmness that is beyond its own competences. "We have yet to come to understand that the 'great mystery' not only exists in itself, but that it is mainly rooted in the human soul," Jung said. The 13th-century mystic Meister Eckehart goes a step further:

"There is a force in the soul that is untouchable from all created things (...) It cannot be named in words, free and empty as it is from all created things, just as God is free and empty in himself. (...) As far as this power is concerned, the soul is equal to God."

As mentioned, our consciousness does not encompass the soul, and thus it is not appropriate to speak condescendingly or negatively of it. "As the eye corresponds to the sun, so the soul corresponds to God" (Jung). When religion becomes totally disused or totally externalised, which is even worse, the soul is 'deflated'; degenerates into a meaningless 'concept' as it is stripped of its deepest depth and greatest height. It is striking how Eastern spirituality shows exactly the opposite practice: all the high and low is contained in the (transcendental) self. This makes the value of *atman* or the *Buddha nature* immoderate. In the West, god is largely written off, and with it, the value of the divine in man also drops to zero. An extremely dangerous and critical situation. Man bearer of a divine spark? According to transhumanists such as Yuval Harari, Steven Pinker, Ray Kurzweil, George Church and many others, "we" will from now on play God ourselves and, through a "spiritual machine", not only "improve man" but even "achieve immortality".

Indeed, too few have experienced for themselves that the divine stature is the deepest property of one's own soul. People have met God only in a world outside themselves, in religions, churches and mosques, but never in their own souls. Religions have failed, completely, and never got beyond a thin layer of varnish. Of course, the Enlightenment thinking has tirelessly contributed to this as well. What better way to darken the mind than simply by rationalising everything, only open to unambiguous explanation? See also my article "Fear For Freedom" at <https://widoblokland.com/2022-3/>

TRUTH AS PARADOX

But the essential consists in paradox, where reason is perplexed and no longer able to act. And nothing is more paradoxical than the alchemical vessel of our own psyche. *We only find certainty in uncertainty.* But who dares, can live with that without becoming psychotic? (Perhaps here too lies a small proof of the good use of art). To do so, we have to give up all intellectual pride and recognise the narrowness, if not short-sightedness, of our own thinking. There is more than we little humans are capable of, and even the most inveterate logical-positivist cannot deny at least the possibility of it.



Circumambulatio 2 [The golden flower] – 2023

This paradox is what first led Jung to speak of the archetype of the *self*. A concept "determined enough on the one hand to express the essence of human completeness, but indeterminate enough on the other to express the indescribable and indeterminable nature of wholeness". To the self, as mentioned, there is no limit, but at the same time it takes shape in every human being. Without opposites, there is no experience of wholeness. Simply because exclusion, one-sidedness, cannot encompass wholeness. Incidentally, Jung saw alchemy in this as a kind of undercurrent compared to the 'religious' ripples on the surface of our consciousness. I myself see psychological or spiritual alchemy more and more as a phenomenal artistic interpretation of the ineffable miracle of human evolution and spiritual transfiguration.

We find a similar paradox in Hermes Trismegistos' statement from the Emerald Tablets: "That which is above is equal to that which is below and that which is below is equal to that which is above." Opposites are united in a *conjunctio oppositorum*. Like the reflection on the shores of a still lake, the higher is reflected in the lower, and vice versa. It is a reciprocal relationship in which the lower is in many ways an extremely weak reflection of the heavenly. All spiritual traditions tell of 'the fall', of a primordial state, a wholeness far beyond present reality, to which man seems to be denied access, or to which he seems to lack the capabilities. Realisation, individuation: it is called the very long road, but it is only 'endless' for those who have strayed so far that they no longer want or dare to believe in the road.



Simulacrum (1) The whole does not start from fragments – 2022, detail.

THE SOUL AS MEDIATOR

As indicated, I tend to think of leaf, butterfly or feather in the *Simulacrum* works as legitimate representations of the soul, which I thus consider a much more concrete phenomenon than the concept of spirit. The two are definitely not the same thing. Philosopher and educator Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhof (1900-1986) attributes material qualities to the soul, despite its invisibility. So how can we define the soul? According to him, the soul is "the vehicle that transports the elements from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven." In fact, he sees the soul as the mediator between mind and body that maintains relations between the world 'above' and the world 'below'. This is fully consistent with Jungian psychology and the most modern findings in the field of reincarnation and regression therapy (Maarten Oversier, 2021). Aïvanhof calls the soul the Jacob's ladder as mentioned in the Genesis story and along which angels ascended and descended in Jacob's dream: image of the venous and arterial circulation of the universe "and that is precisely the soul".

Remarkably, in his view, spirit has no direct influence on matter. This therefore requires a mediator - the soul - as an instrument which the spirit uses to work on the physical plane. The soul too is a 'body' and correspondingly possesses a (very subtle) material quality, otherwise it could not fulfil its role of mediator. In his view, people use the word spirit or mind too casually. We speak of 'evil spirit, cunning mind, traitorous mind, while the spirit is absolutely free of all these blemishes. In reality, we should speak here of the intellect, which can indeed be all too cunning. Spirit, however, is the core, the kernel, the keeper of life, and for this reason it must be absolutely pure, without defect.

Spirit is like the point set by a compass: an almost imperceptible reality, dimensionless, while the soul is like the circumference; wide and vast. "Why? Because the soul must have immeasurably large reserves to feed the mind". The mind is nourished by the soul. Very similar to a tree, whose branches are like antennae straining to pick up energies from the atmosphere, while the roots do this same work in the ground, our etheric body (often called etheric double) roots deep into the physical body and at the same time spreads its ramifications into the 'higher' regions where it picks up energies from which it then enlivens the physical body. (Think of the Eastern concept of *prana*, Bergson's *elan vital* or Wilhelm Reich's *orgone*) Just as a tree professes to be a true alchemist, we humans are also alchemists: converters of spiritual energy into matter, just as we conversely 'purify' spiritual energy from our food to enliven our bodies. Without this spiritual energy, you can't even move

a finger. In his clear spiritual imagery, based on ancient Gnostic insights and Hermetic and Kabbalistic philosophy, Aïvanhov argues that the physical human being is literally born from a cosmic body that acts as a womb, in different layers such as the mental, astral and etheric body, which in reality is, of course, one interpenetrating process. In Hinduism, these layers or interpenetrating bodies are called *koshas*.



Simulacrum (1) The whole does not start from fragments – 2022

MIND IS THE MATRIX OF ALL MATTER

Crucial to understanding the proposition that both the soul and ether body are material in nature is the understanding that matter extends far beyond the four states under which we know it. The four 'aggregate states' as taught in school are only the four crudest states of matter. Plasma, for instance, occupies an increasingly important place in modern physics and astronomy. Not for nothing has it been rumoured for more than half a century how 'dark energy' and 'dark matter' make up as much as 96% of the universe. The term 'ether', as the 5th element, was still widely used at the beginning of the 20th century, only to be gradually 'written off' thereafter because of its invisibility and intangibility. In esotericism, notions like vital ether and light ether have been commonplace as of old. Even Maxwell, of the famous Maxwell equations (laws of electromagnetism) assumed the existence of the ether - but not as a material concept. Torsion fields are commonplace in modern physics. It is therefore perhaps even more important for proper understanding to realise that the terms material and immaterial (in opposition to spiritual) have actually long since had their day. Quantum physicist Erwin Schrödinger already said that nothing can be called purely material, nor is there anything that can be considered completely immaterial. All *action* (I recall here once again the Greek word *enerchei*) is an action of something-in-something; a flow-through. Here, science at the edge of the (in)tangible by definition comes up empty-handed. Here again the boundless wonder of all-that-is opens up.

In our own case, human existence, at least esotericism teaches, the 'contact point' of divine efficacy in man literally lies at the top of the right ventricle: indestructible 'god spark' (*Seelenfünklein*) of our being. "No fire can burn it, water cannot wet it, air cannot dry it. No arrow can hit it and no sword can cleave it," says the Bhagavad Gita. *Tat tvam asi*; THAT you are: indestructible germ of light and dimensionless Consciousness.

*"There is no matter as such – mind is the matrix of all matter".
(...)*

“All matter originates and exists only by virtue of a force which brings the particle of an atom to vibration and holds this most minute solar system of the atom together. We must assume behind this force the existence of a conscious and intelligent mind. This mind is the matrix of all matter.”

[Max Planck]



Circumambulatio 2 [The golden flower] – 2023

*) Note: Some older notes regarding earlier mirror-works:

Nothing in this world can be separated from its surroundings.

Space is an empty concept that has no real existence of its own whatsoever.

All that there is, is the physical and spatial reality – to be ‘in the world’. Our presence is not *in* space, but *is* spatial. Things do not find themselves *in* a space, but *are* spatial. In other words; reality unfolds itself *as* time-space, without revealing anything about its origin. Together with the sculpture, we are present (...) By means of these ‘heterogeneous’ sculptures – only functioning as such in accordance with the context of their given surroundings – space is unfolding; the object is presented as if it were placed ‘outside of itself’ in the whole of space which ultimately absorbs it. These sculptures do not show specific different sides or views, but become each time a different image synchronically with the shift of our own point of view. They become explicitly dependant of us and are themselves an inseparable part of our own presence.

[1994]

‘(...) however, the mirrors throw everything you see back on yourself, they make you keep in mind that it is yourself who is looking at that exact moment, from that specific point of view. They reflect everything back to oneself. A mirror is the ultimate ephemeral image, the infinite nothingness. Whatever it shows, is only shown in response to our own glance, the direction which our own mind takes at that very moment’.

[1998]



The Golden Flower [opus alchumicum], detail – 2023.

Furthermore, I could refer to the many other works of mine not mentioned in this article, using (mostly) convex or concave mirrors. I mention the titles here:

For Your Eyes Only,
Corpus Christi (I-IV),
Different Ways Of Arranging Trays (I-VII),
Rear View Mirror Jungle,
Écliptique [La Vie Est Un Rêve, Moi Un Miroir],
Le Rien Est Immense,
Seeing Without Eyes,..., Walking Without Legs,
Tat Tvam Asi (I-IV)
L'Éveil de Magritte [Et In Arcadia Ego]& Actaeon [Et In Arcadia Ego],
L'Atelier Et Au-Delà,
Constellations Célestielles (I-V),
Eye For A Tree (I-V),
A Shot In The Dark,
Mimesis,
Avidja,
Ik Ben Nooit,..., Integendeel Daar,
A Line Made By Walking,
It Is Yourselves You See And What You Are,
The Science Deception.
Study for Vesica Piscis - 'His Appearance Is A Disappearance'

For more notes on using mirrors, see both my books NETI NETI - 2019 and ABSENCE PRESENCE - 2021.