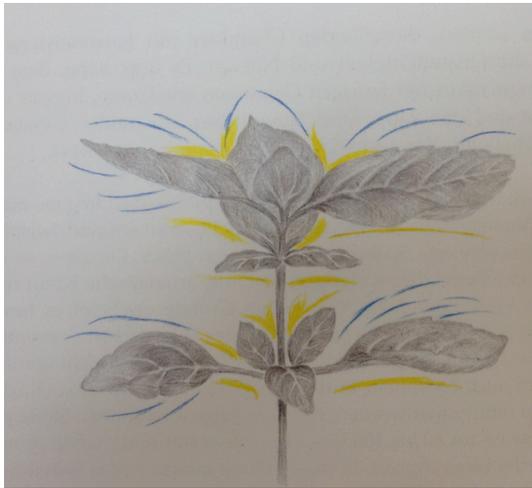


The ether body and perceiving the ether body

A chapter from the book
Nutrition
and the giving power
of the human being.
The spiritual meaning of nutrition.

By Heinz Grill



Translation by Lisa Winchester
2018

About this translation

The writings of Heinz Grill, which have arisen out of his spiritual insight, are expressed through his native German language, and hence within a particular language structure.

With a literal translation from German into English, the structure that the insight has been placed within gets lost. On closer examination this change in structure carries significance, for with it some of what the author wants to say, and some of the personality of the author, fades away.

In this text we often find the author describing first the object or theme he is looking at, and then he says what it's doing. In the process of mediation we find this same structuring, of looking at an image and then seeing some of what it is doing. If you follow the text objectively, therefore, you enter into the same way of looking as the author, so the original structure is guiding the reader as how to look at something in order to come to a deeper insight. It leads you to enter into a meditative process with the described theme.

Also, the topic of this chapter is the ether body, which interestingly if you look very carefully to the structure of this text, you'll find it also describes the movements that the etheric body makes. Such as etherical movements of contracting and expanding, a circular movement, connecting movements, and polar opposite movement.

When the original structure is lost in the translation process you lose these characteristics.

Hence, with this translation I have tried to stay as close to the original structure and to read it as objectively as I can, and so because if this you may be challenged to step out of your usual way of reading and to work a bit harder to make sense of what is being said. However, in its original form it is also challenging for the German reader to comprehend! There is much more that can be said about the characteristics of this writing, but in general this unique, stylistic quality of both an exact, scientific, logical clarity coupled with the delights of a beautiful poetic imagery, I have favoured over the dictates of English grammar. In this way I hope that the authenticity of the author, as well as the aims and intentions of the author come through more strongly.

To note, I approached the translation process with these guiding questions, which are based on an idea from Heinz Grill in how to read objectively. They include:

- What is the meaning that the author wants to convey?
- How is the meaning being built up in the structuring of the text?
- What images are being used to convey the meaning?
- Is the translated text understandable, but still able to participate with the original way the meaningful picture is being built up and does it express the personality of the author?

From experience I've found these questions very helpful in finding a more objective relationship to the text, and if a general reader also asks these questions so they too can find a more objective way of reading, rather than projecting onto the words subjectively.

The ether body and perceiving the ether body.

The concept of the ether, as it is used here, should not be confused with the physical ether, for example, like the one previously assumed for radio waves. When speaking in regard to food from ether forces, this means as much as when one speaks about the sun-forces, which live in the plant. The ether actually has its origin in the sun and in this way is not dependent on the earthly world. While the earth is characterized by solids and minerals, the ether forms that finer element, which on the cosmic level provides the life-force being or connecting being for an entire universal structure.

This connecting fine substance, in spiritual science and occult tradition, is brought in analogy with the element of water. It may, however, the outer water, not directly be equated with the ether. Water is only a kind of physical expression of the underlying finer essence-substance of the ether. Nevertheless water possesses almost all analogies, which are reminiscent of the life-giving and life-force being element of ether. A plant without the addition of water, is not capable of growth, chemical conversion, reproduction, to greenery and flowering.

Wherein lies, however, the common ground between the outer nature of water and the warming and light-filled forces of the sun? The sun sends warmth and light outwards and because of this possesses that magnificent ability to transform matter as well as all physical phenomena. In the light of the sun lives the ability to transform. This ability to transform is outwardly visible in the plant and it's different growth phases. With the spring light the plant begins to sprout and germinate. The first leaves reveal their tender green and finally they rise up to form flowers and fruit.

So that transformation can enter, however, de-constructing processes must meet with construction processes continuously. Matter must literally become a little bit wrestled, a substance gets taken away, so that they can enter the circle of transformation and build a new and next form. The concept of metamorphosis, the transformation of lower into higher forms, was coined for example from anthroposophy, and describes in general the transformation that arises through the sun forces.



Side note

Metamorphosis means in the original sense of the word re-shaping. Goethe introduced the term to botany, as the regular shape-change of the leaves along the shoot, from cotyledon (seed leaf) up to the flower formation. In addition, metamorphosis is designated as the adaptation of the three vegetative basic-organs of root, stem, shoot axis and leaf, in particular living and environmental conditions.



The sketch shows a descending and an ascending line, which themselves, however, do not touch. The etheric growth follows this law. It is not recognisable through the senses, however, it is recognisable through the expression in a metaphysical insight.

Left: Oat-ears, which are shown in different growth-phases. All growth happens not in a linear way, but always in a kind of polarity of dying and creating anew.

Water is the element, which is no longer as secure and stable as that which appears in solid matter. It is already a moving, flexible, connecting, sliding substantiality, which can pass over on the one hand to dissolve in vapour and the other hand to solidify in a crystalline form. Were there, however, no sun forces, so there would also be no being of water, because this flexible sliding and flowing describes that condition, which no longer belongs entirely to the pure solidity of matter, but already includes a kind of condition of dissolution and solidification. Water is, therefore, the mobile being, which from the sun to the earth was banished, and must carry out that work, so that the sun forces can accomplish transformation by breaking-down and newly forming matter.

The etheric forces must, however, not only fulfil their task in the watery environment. They are also, absolutely, to be found in the airy atmosphere. In particular, however, they live there, where human thought is brought to effectiveness. All thinking activity, which is not to be confused with intellectualism, but which is a creative activity, connected to true thought work, contributes to transformation in life and must consequently make use of the different kinds of ether. If someone in a concentrated and conscious way, a calm idea forms or a conceptual comparison attaches, they are comparable to the sun's activity and begin in a noble-genteel way to transform both themselves as well as their environment.

There are from Rudolf Steiner four kinds of ether, which are the fire ether, the light ether and the chemical ether, as well as finally the life ether. These four ethers can divide into two upper and two lower dimensions. The fire and light force in the worlds-creation shine in from above upon earthly existence, while those forces like the ordinary life and all therein situated chemical-alchemical processes, seem already to be given in earthly existence. All four kinds of ether are, however, sun-like and because of this no longer carry only the pure earthly character in their inner being. The difference of the fire-ether, the uppermost, to life-ether, the lowest, is only one, that the fire-ether actually remains more in the outer sphere of the cosmic zone, while the life ether is actually descending until in the innermost centring of the earth. The ether belongs in this sense to different specific regions. They describe in their totality, however, all life processes, which in a fine way not only live alone in the plant, but in the entire sun-space.

Whoever wants to behold the ether must as a first discipline, devote themselves to an imagination as is here illustrated. If someone only spoke of life-forces and defined them entirely from the origin of matter, so would their perception actually be based on an erroneous imagination. The etheric forces are only at home in matter or in the worlds-creation, they do not, however, come forth out of matter.

Side note



A further example for the work of etheric forces: Each building-up precedes with a breaking-down. No line may within the polarity touch the other.

One could say, that this thinking activity can work as both uplifting as well as deconstructing. It can, however, on closer observation not really be a destructive activity, since all acts of violence and misconducts, which come out of people, occur only from one condition, in which the so-called 'I' can no longer lead the consciousness and, therefore, the thinking activity in a mere intellectualism or a kind of impulsive power degenerates. A real thinking activity leads in a very natural way to a raising of moral conscience and social responsibility in being human.

As a second discipline it is favourable, when the one who wants to approach the concrete seeing of this fine-like view, devotes themselves to some specific exercises. A first example consists of this, that the practitioner takes a piece of paper and marks two points in good reasonable distance. Now you place the question, how can these two points come into a connection? Since the etheric forces in life always the connecting element prefer, it is favourable for the practitioner to engage with the basic idea, how can the connecting conditions come about? The connecting is in the truest sense the art, which the ether body, in which the ether is active, performs in the human organism.

The two points someone could directly with a line connect. This connection would appear from a first glance the best, because it is straightforward and direct. If someone observes the etheric forces, however, they notice that it never gives a direct line. All movements in the etheric body round themselves to a circle, almost as if it is the sun itself, and their connection carries, therefore, in a sense, a revelation, the attempt to form a whole continuously. The practitioner should, therefore, not connect the two points with a straight-line, but with a swing-like curve, which represents something round or almost circular.

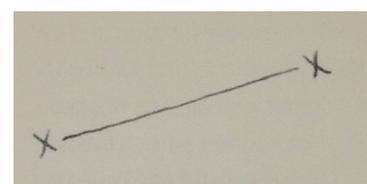
As the practitioner devotes to this task, they notice the subtle feeling, of how the sweeping, almost circular curve form produces less of an isolated structure, but a larger, whole being. This straight line, however, does not represent a real connection, which takes into account the surroundings, but which simply the two points, in the attempt to take the shortest connection, externally unites together. The straight line remains, however, existing for itself as an external abstraction, while the curved line opens the first hint of the whole-being, the inclusion of a larger whole.

A second exercise will promote a body free experience, in the sense of a first form of subtle-feeling. The ether forces one cannot recognise through the physical senses, because the ether forces are actually not accessible to the perceiving eye. For this reason must you, the aspirant on the path to clairvoyance, practice in very concrete seeing, in the sense of a body-free consciousness. This seeing in the soul, through thinking and feeling, on the whole, is schooled, that you are active outside the body in free availability and carried by a fully ripe 'I' consciousness. One draws on a piece of paper a large bow and marks a point on this bow. Now one imagines, that this point on the bow shines in a magnificent way in all directions.

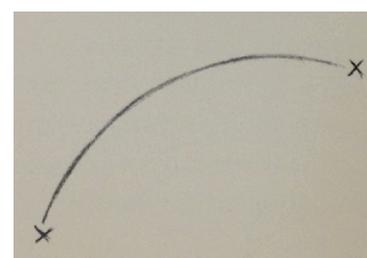
Side note

An etheric body is that organized whole body, in which the individual kinds of ether can carry out at the same time their organizing catabolic and anabolic activity. Just as the scientist speaks about a physical body, speaks the one who conducts spiritual research about a whole-body, which an etheric body is. Each person possesses a more or less strong etheric body, without this they could not live. This etheric body is, however, with the physical eyes not recognisable, but the expression of life gives an indication of it, that life or ether forces work on the inside of human existence.

Exercise to perceive the ether forces.



Best apparent connection



Swinging-circular connection, in the sense of a whole.

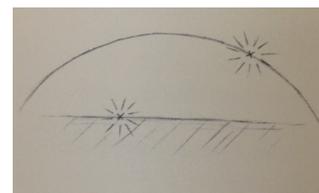
It is like a sun. The entire bow, on which the point is found, is like a big firmament. At any position this sun-like radiating can be situated. Underneath one takes the earth and sketches it schematically with a simple horizontal surface. Now one could imagine that this sun, which shines out of a certain point on the upper bow, sends its radiation downwards and in this way illuminates the earth's surface. In fact, however, it does not give this reality, like when you compare perceiving with the eyes the sun's rays, which seem to arrive on the earth. For the spiritual-beholder a point shines in the world's firmament sun-like, while at the same time without influences from outside and without outer visible connection, this point in the interior of earth's existence or in the immediate closeness to the earth is also resurrected. The etheric light of the sun shines out in each moment, revealing itself out of the most immediate source in the human inner, in the experiencing of the soul, it brings this perception and an insight to knowledge, as well as a resurrection of the light ether immediately forth.

The practitioner can, therefore, also mark any one arbitrary point on the horizontal surface, which symbolizes the earth, and can also be like the sun shining. So just as the sun rises to above, shines the same sun-like power by itself like a resurrection in earthly existence.

A third exercise can further encourage awareness for the work of the etheric forces. For this it is favourable, if the practitioner also again by means of drawing on a piece of paper, devotes himself to the idea, that different forces stream together towards a point below. So just as the forces of gravity perform an attraction direct to the earth, the practitioner can imagine, that different directional forces flow together, and gather towards below to a punctual centre gather. A symbol such as an upwards-open fork-shape with two or even more divisions can occur.

While this movement - which from above to below is subtly felt as a centering and collecting - is reconstructed in the imagination, the practitioner must devote themselves to a kind of counter-movement. Towards below a punctual gathering takes place. What or which forces, however, simultaneously with the fall of forces in the cosmos take place? The cosmos stretches out of itself, becoming bow-formed, increasingly open and wider. So that the drawing of falling and gathering-itself is complete, the practitioner can draw a widening bow towards above.

These three exercises show the lawfulness, which is rooted in the ether body. While a 'fall' towards below takes place, a punctual centring concentration or rooting increases into a widening surrounding action. The ether works in this regularity of movements and counter-movements, of concentration and opening.



Side note

The study of etheric law is certainly not monotonous and boring, because it contains those peculiar paradoxes, which with purely external measurements or purely sensually bound research work cannot be proved.

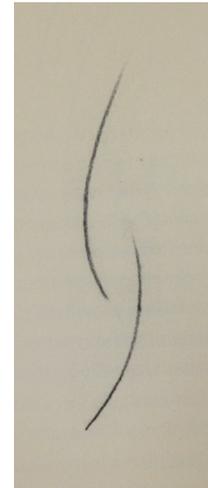
For the scientist who analyses the sensory object, therefore, this metaphysical research method a first mysterious question can pose.

If you differentiate, however, the two research methods the spiritual and the scientific, and their very different outcomes, they can peacefully come together and with certainty supplement each other.



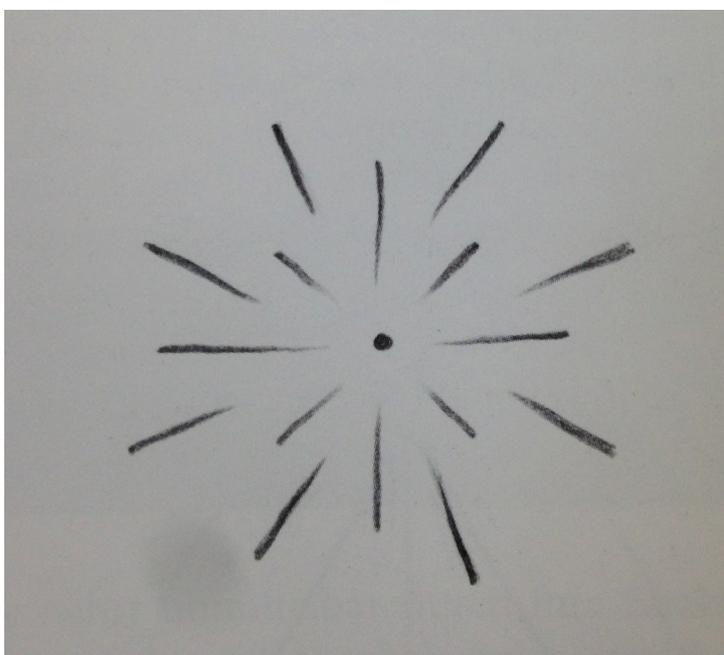
These three exercises, can alongside other contemplation exercises, which later will be continued, represent a first assistance for spiritual perception. The exercises are in this way conceived, that they the normal, presently automated and learnt sense process, through a new soul-like and spiritual law enrich the corresponding awareness. The thinking and the feeling must, upon the one who wants to learn spiritual seeing, win a transformation. Would the practitioner with their usual imaginative-thinking observe a plant, and want to see in it the ethers, so they would strain both their wilful thinking and also their senses. As someone, however, the laws in worlds creation - as they are truly given - becomes progressively conscious in the soul and as a result raises their thought to a new level, so they lay down in their soul constitution the foundations on which these processes can be imagined, subtly felt and finally perceived as real.

The usual sensory experience takes the death process and the resurrection process as not really true, and therefore this polarity of etheric growth or etheric flowing, can be so difficult to think. For all observational exercises must, therefore, the thought be schooled to that level of becoming conscious of apparent contradictions of movement and counter-movement, of centring and streaming out, of ascending and falling, of surrounding effects and depth effects.



Side note

The movements in the ether body are very different and versatile. It is significant, however, that the movement, which takes place in 'etheric flowing', always in the polarity of death and resurrection you unfold into expression.



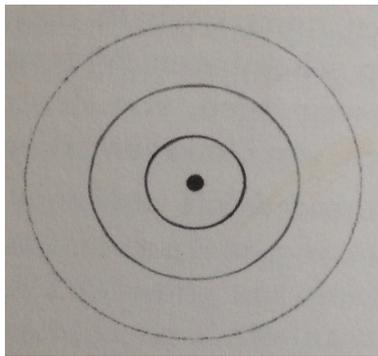
The drawing shows on the one hand a point, a centre, on the other hand a burgeoning periphery. The periphery carries to the point and the point carries, without stepping into contact with the other lines, into burgeoning dynamics.

The four ethers

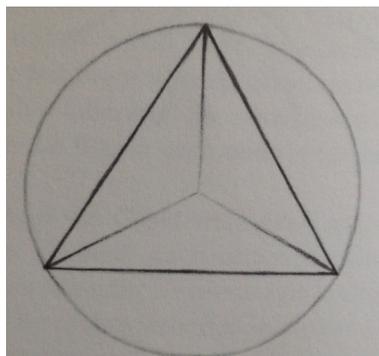
The four ethers, according to the statements of Rudolf Steiner, actually cannot be exactly reproduced in a schematic drawing, since they are – as already said – built up on complementary oppositeness and agility.

The fire ether

With the fire ether, for example, a cosmic expansion or infinity is given, while at the same time, the seemingly so contradictory movement with a centring depth-effect takes place. The colour blue can at best allow the depth effect and expansion, to be recognised with human subtle sensing. Symbolically the fire ether would with a circle as a sign of infinity and a point in the middle as an indication of depth and centring be represented. The representations are only meant in a general sense because as it were, the circle is only a symbol.



More exactly and appropriately can this polarity of circumference and depth-effect in the image of a circle, in which a 3-dimensional tetrahedron is found, be reproduced. The centring depth is found in the middle-point, while the circle encompasses the 3-dimensional figure of the tetrahedron. With this image the fire ether can furthermore, be meditatively still somewhat better grasped.



Side note

In experiencing the ether, however, one must not start out from exact geometrical relations.

The ether never remains static, but is always in its polar complements dynamic.

For this reason are the geometrical symbols only an aid of abstract application and for schooling the ability to think,

so that the ether forces can be grasped in their fundamental nature.

By experiencing the hidden polarities, the practitioner prepares the steps towards a vision of the metaphysical extrasensory movements.

You can also find suggestions and exercises for an extrasensory comprehension of the four ethers in the brochure, 'The four ethers in bread'.

Light ether

The plant is adorned with light, so that it itself becomes a specific expression for the light. The light ether shines out of the cosmic surroundings, it gives the plants their beauty. As the light ether shines out of the cosmic surroundings, it builds no fixations in a material ground or in a material form. If one wants to draw it, one must start out from a cosmic feeling and imagine a wide open space. The drawer mustn't get into a fixation with their pencil, they must as it were free from the body, free from tensions and constraints, enter entirely into a free sketching out of rhythmical, moving and radiating lines. These lines become more elegant, the less the drawer themselves is with their fixedness.

The light ether, which shines out of cosmic space, limits the plant, it forms out of the surroundings with the most delicate limiting touches. With these limitations they create, however, a wondrous crystal-clear structure, which makes a new growth possible. For this reason is again experienced, the polarity of limitation and crystal-forming growth. Again in the ether two completely contradictory poles, through a mutually dependent moving principle, are connected with each other: that is limitation and growth.



The sun does not nourish the plant directly through its rays, it touches and limits them and yet directly raises a new crystal-forming structure out of the surrounding conditions of light.

Side note

Plants grow and germinate even in the dark if they can mobilise sufficient nutrients from the soil, water or their own storage organs.

Light, also from a biological perspective does not directly set growth in progress, but acts on the plant like a signal, starting and limiting.

Light is absorbed in the seedling by receptors (phytochrome proteins), which regulate other processes, such as greening, flowering and above all shape changes. According to previous research shoots become longer, weaker, spread themselves out less in the surroundings and in the short-term grow much faster when they lack permanently available light.

All parts of the plant created in darkness appear softer and more pliable than those grown in brightness.

The leaves are often undifferentiated, thinner, scaly or rough (suarrose) and pale.

At the same time the shoot, the opposite pole to the root, grows poorly.

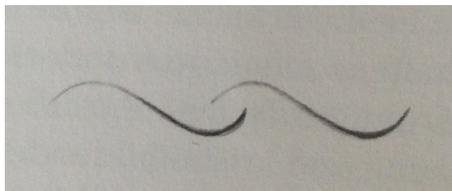
The plant grown entirely without light shows, that light is necessary for strength to erect and to form the inner structure, for the natural proportions, harmonious forms and variety of colours.

Just a few minutes of daily light exposure steers development again to a greater extent into its normal plant-shape.

Chemical ether

The chemical ether, as named according to Anthroposophy, which represents the actual core-substance of the ethers, works through the ability to pull itself together. It pulls itself together more to a powerful compact and connecting form, and works at the same time also attracting towards it from the outside.

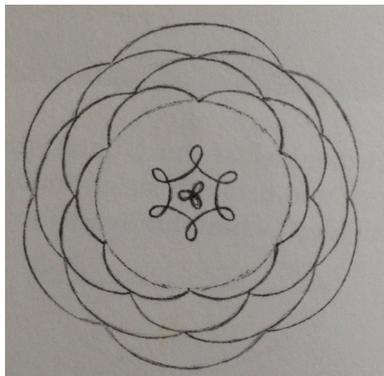
The opposition, which is now created in the sense of a kind of counter movement, is that, which directly through this contraction a next growth takes place. Like a next wrapping or sheathing, a new physical layer arises, a leaf or a flower form. Not in a linear growth, but in a mutual play of contraction and new manifestation growth arises in the chemical ether.



Those waves, which thicken downwards towards their end, cause an almost desirable fine, newly beginning counter movement. The growth of the finer begins immediately across from the condensed.

Another drawing, which can represent this chemical ether almost more geometrically, develops as follows: One takes a circle as a start and reflects this inwards into a hexagonal form. The sides of a regular hexagon should fold towards the inside. With elegant loops this hexagon can now be connected.

As you develop a connection towards the inside, you reveal a brilliant growth-process towards the outside. Now this figure can even out of a three-part regular loop be pulled together, while to the outside in the rising counter-movement to the circle, bows form in a growing mass.



Side note

From plant physiological studies it is known, that green parts of a plant transform inorganic substances to organic substances, which are fundamental for life and growth. These compounds emerge in the course of photosynthesis, in which it is assumed that light supplies the energy. Photosynthesis is according to research a complex biochemical process. First, with the aid of pigments, electromagnetic energy of light is absorbed and converted into chemical energy, then out of low-energy inorganic substances, which come from the environment (water and carbon dioxide), new original and energetic organic compounds are cultured. With these descriptions it becomes clear, that etheric forces work both from the light as well as from the chemical 'household' of the plant, and make use of the available material substances.

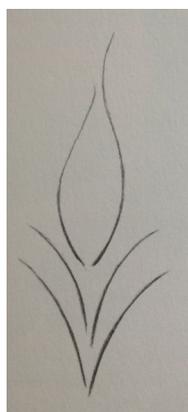
From anthroposophical groups many drawings are given, which are based on a rhythmical principle. They are mostly used therapeutically for schooling the thinking and also to revitalize the ether body.

For this text, in which the schooling of an initial experience of the etheric life is intended, this aspect, which is used therapeutically in Anthroposophy, can again be discovered anew and further brought to life. The drawings reproduce as accurately as possible, how the polar experience of contracting and rising exists in the etheric action of the worlds-forces.

Life ether

The life ether develops likewise with a polarity, which at best one can describe with descent and ascent. While one force, as if to die slides downwards, stands up a new movement like a flame.

All ether are as a rule experienced like flame forms, but which, complement each other. Materially seen, from a purely external consciousness one would perceive these movements as contradictory. In the ether, which acts free from gravity, however, prevails the law, that directly the contradictory - in the sense of a counter-movement - complements. If, therefore, a movement descends towards below, begins at the same time a kind of new movement or flame form ascending towards above.



Note:

This death process on the one hand, and the process of newly-forming on the other hand, is shown already also in scientific observation, because faster than the plant as a whole, age and die its foliage, flowers, fruits and some other of its cell types. Tissue with the ability to divide in embryonic germination zones, on the other hand, remain with the plant for it's life-span, so that new parts are constantly being shaped-out. At the outermost periphery, at the roots and young leaf-tips, and at some stem cuttings the tissue remains always soft and actively-dividing, while other parts lignify or fall out from the whole. Also, observations under the microscope show processes of new-formation and death, which are mutually dependent on each other. Scientific research can, therefore, not necessarily be seen as separate from the esoteric view of dying and newly-rising.



Side note

One takes some seeds and observes them. At first the external shape can be experienced. From this observation the idea can now ensue, that in these seeds the specific plant archetype is already embodied. Step by step allow the following imaginative-process, like a logical fantasy, which thinks further possibilities: The seed-pod dies and the germ grows. But also the germ dies and a first root and stem framework emerges. Finally, however, this also recedes back again, and there emerges an always further-forming leaf, flower and fruit-structure. Once in the last stage of a cycle, the seeds themselves are created again, as a rule the plant dies until completely gone.

With these contemplative and pictorially imagined observations, the activity of the life ether for the first time can be grasped. A feeling of calmness becomes perceptible with this exercise, for the one with active concentration.

