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Goethean Science and Art in Place Assessment and Design: Holistic Perspectives of the Built Environment

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The paper explores the Goethean way of science, which I suggest unites science and art in holistic research. The experiential methodology of the German scientist and writer J.W. Goethe will be portrayed as complementary to quantitative place assessment methods and as an entrance to the lesser-known territory of the human interior. The paper briefly introduces the key features of phenomenology as related to the Goethean approach, and the person and scientific method of Goethe's. Part of the exploration is the question of validity of subjective experience and how the Goethean methodology fulfills the criteria of 'good' science. It concludes with a look at how applicants and researchers ways of seeing might change in the course of working with the method, and prospects towards an integration of meaning as well as regaining a sense of value in research, design and individuals' lives.

The images are taken from my *Goethean Studies in Siena, A study of the Piazza del Campo, 2005*, which were part of the research toward my master's degree in Holistic Science at Schumacher College, Devon, UK. The image of the plant is part of a 2004 study of the Hazelnut (stages in time).

PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Rational Perspectives of the Built Environment

Worldwide planning and design is generally carried out on the basis of geometry, statistics and economics, which is not necessarily wrong, however misses out on certain aspects. People live with these results. However, their daily life experiences can remain unreflected. It is suggested that planning and design need to be supported by researching the actual individual experience of people through holistic-intuitive, qualitative methods of place assessment and including them into the design process. Worldview and concepts held by society and the individual as well as behaviour affect the appearance and state of the grown and built environment, and those in turn affect our physical and mental health. Hence, good design and well being are closely related, and how we see and act upon the world has an impact not only on our places but also on ourselves.

Intuitive Methods in Place Assessment

In various cultures around the world, intuitive ways of place assessment and place making have been part of life for a long time. Today, the general interest in a more holistic approach to planning and design seems to be on the rise. A number of individuals as well as institutions and organisations, often with a concern for environmentally sound design, or an anthroposophical background have begun acknowledging the meaning and value of design. Form, colour and the materials which surround us in our learning and working environments, or when recovering or recuperating from illness can be considered highly influential on human physical, psychological and spiritual well being. The Chinese tradition of feng shui (the pattern of wind and water), the Taoist art and science of living in harmony with the environment) has become known across Europe during the last few decades, and in some areas of place design it has been applied with some success. A European equivalent under the name of geomancy, which basically means reading the meaning of the landscape, has taken up some of the elements of feng shui as well as developed its own tools. Shamanic rituals of calling on the spirits of places, as originating in tribal culture, enjoy some popularity.

While the ancient methods may lack in rational elements of dealing with their findings and, if used without conscious reflection, can bring the practitioner in close vicinity to the mythopoetic realm, I suggest that they should not be abandoned from the outset but explored toward potential benefits in adding perspectives of place to research that have been neglected.

The Phenomenological Approach to Place

There are great differences between a geometric plan and the dynamics of life, between a blueprint and the in situ reality. The map is not the city: it just gives a flat image of a three-dimensional space that is vibrant with life, full of movement and change, numerous visual and auditory impressions, smells, events, people, buildings, cars, trees. The situation constantly varies between day and night, as well as between the seasons. None of those can be exactly mirrored by numbers and statistics. An example:

Imagine a four-lane road in a city and a holiday log house near a nature reserve, both at five o'clock in the morning. In the city, traffic starts; in the nature reserve, the morning birdsong begins. Noise measurements at both locations result equally in a value of 55dB (A). We consider the measurement with a technical device as of objective value. However, in what ways do the people living in the houses near the sources register these sounds individually and immediately? Perhaps we call them both *loud*, but when we listen closely, there are more qualities in these different sounds. We might call the sounds of the streets a *noise* and the birdsong a *concert*. Direct perception tells us something other than the objective measurement. Neither one is wrong, but the direct encounter from the perspective of the 'I' includes how those sounds are experienced. We also call that subjective, but this kind of subjectivity is not without merit. The subjective experience of many people put together is not just about views and opinions, or like and dislike, but adds to the truth of the full spectrum of human perception.

Characteristics of Phenomenology as Related to the Goethean Method

We describe things and events that we feel are breathtaking, fantastic, wonderful and unbelievable with the adjective 'phenomenal'. We call buildings and natural occurrences, as well as people with extraordinary or supernatural gifts, 'phenomenal'. In some ways phenomenology is about the extraordinary, but it also asks us to see the unique in *all* things; the things of everyday life are each unique and full of wonder. In the phenomenological sense phenomena are all things, events, experiences which we humans experience, live, see, feel and notice in our everyday world, directly and unfiltered - everything we choose to pay attention to and make sense of: with our own instruments of cognition, our five senses, our intuition, all of our body as a universal organ of perception – instruments which can gather far more information than we are usually aware of.

Phenomenology – as a *science of beginnings* – is the study of things and appearances, how they present themselves to our conscious experience, and the study of their meanings for us as humans. It is a way of seeing that makes our personal human experience, everything that is offered to our senses the basis for exploring phenomena, generating knowledge, making sense of them, and understanding their inherent meaning. Out of the sum total of experience, living, seeing, perceiving with our senses and intuition, the phenomenological approach strives to filter out the essential, the important issues, the *essence*, the core of what was sensed there and then. Equally important is the immediate, direct, experiential way we humans consciously realise phenomena. Meaning arises out of the encounter between phenomena and consciousness; without this relationship, things "make no sense". Hence, it is not only an approach to philosophy and science, but also to the exploration of the whole spectrum of human experience.

Phenomenology is a dynamic or evolutionary way of seeing the world. As human beings learn and grow, their concepts of reality evolve and so does the reality they see and create.

Phenomenology also is a qualitative method of inquiry. The core feature is the *description* of the qualities of the phenomena, not their evaluation based on the explanation of cause effect chains or purpose. The description is the path, not the result of the inquiry.

While phenomenology as a philosophy emerged in the early 20th century, in the past decades phenomenological methods have been developed and applied to fields such as physics, biology and chemistry as well as arts, ethics, environment behaviour research, and architecture.

The Goethean Way – The Art of Science

Goethe's way of science draws on holistic-intuitive and qualitative methods, which feature basic parallels to phenomenology as described above, although the term only came into use roughly a century after his lifetime. His combined scientific and artistic approach as a path to understanding is, however, unique.

The Poet and the Scientist

J. W. v. Goethe (1749-1832) is widely known as the most important German poet. In Germany we learn about his poems and study his biography; we are told about his lovers, his friends, and the people he worked with. His plays – the most important being surely *Faust* – continue to be put on stage. About his other facets – his great work and extraordinary insights in the scientific field – we learn very little. Some of us may be aware of his theory of colour. Some might be familiar with the work of Rudolph Steiner – the founder of anthroposophy and the Steiner School – who extensively drew on Goethe's research. During his lifetime, the esteemed artist Goethe was not widely acknowledged as a scientist. One of the reasons might lie in his critique on Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) and his scientific methods and results, for example in the field of optics, light and colour. Goethe's research resulted in different outcomes, and the scientific establishment of his time

did not leave Goethe's findings uncontested. In the 18th century, the perception of science and art as a unity – still prevailing during the Renaissance and exemplified by the complete work of Leonardo da Vinci – had already faded.

Unity of Science and Art

Goethe worked extensively in the fields of botany, zoology, geology, and meteorology, as well as optics and theory of colour. He also did research in history, arts history and architecture. In addition, he was a supporter of the arts, even if sometimes a harsh critic. Following to the wishes of his father, he graduated in law and received a doctorate. At an early age, he became teacher and adviser to the Duke of Weimar, and took a variety of leading positions in Weimar's administration. Beside his writing, he was interested in painting and music, however, he thought of poetry as his best talent.

Goethe clearly considered science and art a unity. His in-depth scientific study of phenomena was complemented by the use of art as a way of knowing - an entrance to intuitive knowledge of the qualities of phenomena. But rather than limiting himself to merely trusting his feeling and/or the interior imagery it can bring about, (as there are certainly tendencies in the modern approach to the above mentioned ancient methods) he combined objective and subjective, rational and intuitive methods of research, which resulted in a more holistic understanding. This, for instance, becomes apparent in his *Faust*, which features many scientific, and philosophical issues, as well as in his scientific scripts: those are distinguished by remarkably poetic language, complemented by many poems and numerous beautiful and exact drawings, but at the same time do not lack in exact empirical description. Goethe is also said to have explored the qualities of space by playing music and dancing with outstretched hands along the walls and across the room.

Science and the Context

One of J.W. Goethe's most important contributions is widely seen to be his research in the field of epistemology. He put high emphasis on the philosophical, historical and societal background of the scientist; he contemplated ethics in science, exactitude and depth of scientific work, the influence of the context of the experiment, and illuminated the part of institutions. Goethe saw science as a process, which depends on the researcher's motives and attitude towards scientific work, previous experiences in life, society and community, and the larger context in general. Hence cognition is also a process of human society, never finished and static, never absolute and never objective. We see what we are; our point of view determines our view. Interestingly, new sciences such as quantum physics have come to similar conclusions about the relationship between the observer and the set up of the experiment, and the result of the observation of phenomena.

Pure Experience

Goethe was – in science as in art – an exact observer. He refused presumptions, hasty conclusions and theoretical edifices. He did not like hypotheses and subsequent search for proof of the same. He preferred an uninfluenced viewpoint, and looked at things from a young child's perspective that does not know anything and still has to learn and realize *everything* for the first time.

One of Goethe's special characteristics is the focus on remaining with the phenomenon throughout the whole process of a study. Pure experience – studying phenomena closely, exactly and in all their different facets, over and over again and in direct contact, is the key to understanding the *pure phenomenon*. The *Ur-Phenomenon*[1] – what a thing essentially or fundamentally is when stripped of the concept on has of it – cannot be recognised in a single step. It appears in the course of going through a process. It appears in its context which it cannot truly get separated from, those natural circumstances that are essential features of the phenomenon. It also is dynamic and ever-evolving as the beholding consciousness in which it appears continues to evolve.

Concept and Theory

Goethe's distance from imposed concepts does not mean that he refused theories; he just had a more original perception of what a theory was. The word *theory* comes from Greek "theoria" which means 'to behold'. He made the *beholding* of the phenomena a central stage of their investigation; *beholding* means staying with the phenomenon in a direct encounter throughout the entire study, as well as holding it in mind, envisioning it. The outer object and the inner subject form an undividable unity. In fact there is no such thing as an object anymore; it is a subject. In that instance, the phenomenon becomes its own theory, one's experience of it becomes true theory, and those two are one and the same. This is what is meant by coming to a true understanding, to a theory that originates in the experience with the phenomenon rather than pre-forming a fast concept, a box of

[1] Goethe's term ur-phenomenon is often translated into English as primordial, basic, elemental, original. This is sometimes misleading as it is not something that is there first or underlying, and from which everything else is produced. It rather is the origin in the sense of the whole which comes to the fore in each of its differentiations.

thought into which we try to squeeze the object of our investigation.

Developing Awareness

Goethe put strong demands on the training and education of the scientist's full range of perceptual skills. Naturally given powers are to be developed, both the outer senses *and* the *inner*, the imaginative and intuitive skills, the intellect and our way of thinking. He considered working on one's own growth and change, and expanding consciousness a life-long process. Also, understanding is an iterative process; thus he tended to revisit previously researched subjects at later stages of his life, and look at them from a different perspective, which deepened his understanding and helped him abandon outdated concepts. He also appreciated group work and co-operation, and considered criticism, discussion, and consensus useful and indispensable parts of scientific work.

THE ROUGH GUIDE TO THE GOETHEAN METHOD

The Goethean method as described below is the result of a number of outlines of different people – among others; the list includes Rudolf Steiner, Jochen Bockemühl, Christopher Day and Nigel Hoffman, as well as it embraces my own experiences and work with participants. Goethe himself certainly would not have advised us to use a step-by-step manual, however it is widely perceived that these steps roughly describe what he did, and how he came to his scientific insights. I would like to give an overview of the stages of a study and how, based on my experience, they relate to an encounter with a place. I would like to avoid the term Goethean *observations*, as it is occasionally used. Even though the beginning of a study might be happening in an observer-mode, however we will soon become participants in an encounter with the phenomenon.

First Impression

The first encounter with a phenomenon is often about a kind of gut feeling; sometimes it is called instinctive. In that, there is no real difference between meeting a place, a person or any other phenomenon. It can be a mixture of instinct, superficial perception, and a first glimpse of an immediate intuitive knowledge. It is vague, but we might remember it later, and notice how close we were to the final result as it reveals itself over time, or how it influences the further course of our relationship.

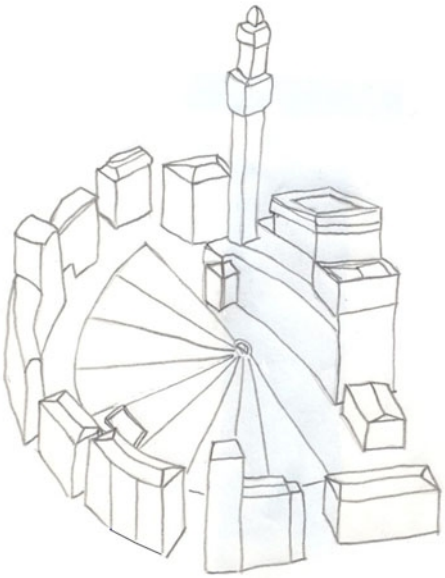
This feeling can be captured in single words or short phrases that solely serve description rather than concetualisation, such as 'warm', 'dark', 'happy', or 'blue'. Comparisons to what we already know from somewhere else, as well as any judgements are to be avoided; these would merely obstruct our openness for what the place has to share. Sometimes the phenomenon might call forth nouns such as 'serenity', 'horror', 'wonder' or others. Impressions can also be expressed in a painting, a *Soul Mood Picture*, using colours that match the feelings that we have. I believe sometimes we might even have no words for what we feel; making an image makes them visible in a very direct way. The way I do it is just to open the palette and make my hand choose the colours, rather than my mind. The same happens with what actually appears on paper: the stroke with the brush is done before thinking about it.

Piazza del Campo, Siena – First Impression

Exact Sense Perception

The *Exact Sense Perception*, as the title suggests, makes use of *all* the senses, as there are sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. By using the complete spectrum of the senses we try to capture as much as we can the exterior details and facts, and we describe as much as possible what we get with all the senses. This is the stage where we go into the parts, gather information, and look primarily from the outside at the surface of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, this way of looking at the phenomenon is different from the approach as used in a mere analytical assessment: quantitative methods such as counting and measuring, as well as verbal, and even technical descriptions are not excluded. But to a far greater extent we pay attention to and describe the qualitative properties of the phenomenon, the visual aspects such as colour, shape, details, and the whole spectrum of auditory, olfactory, tactile and gustatory stimulation. The utmost importance lies in an accurate description of what we perceive with our senses of sight, hearing, smell, touch and even taste. It can be an important part of the sensual investigation to eat the fruit of a plant, to taste the leaves or a petal of a flower, to feel how it feels to the fingertips and to the

tongue. As far as designed spaces, i.e. buildings, squares or streets are concerned, I give a description of the appearance, I can also measure length, width, height, and I look at numbers and forms of windows, and wall materials; I describe the properties as to the architectural period, colours, and so forth. I sit down on the floor of a square, and touch the walls of a building.



Piazza del Campo, Siena: Outline

The description includes the conditions and composition of landscape, flora and fauna, At this stage, I sometimes find drawing maps and taking some photographs helpful. The appearance and behaviour of the people, and, if at all possible, their statements about how they feel in a particular place should become part of the study. I tend to describe my impressions mostly in written words. Occasionally, I also begin to do sketches. The *Exact Sense Perception* has a grounding quality; sometimes it might prove useful to return to it at later stages of the perceptional process that tend to turn out more lofty.

Exact Sensorial Imagination

We begin to enter a different, a participative mode of perception. We start to engage into a closer relationship with the phenomenon. Here we try to fathom the phenomenon in its fluidity, its coming-into-being, its history, existence and change over time. We recognise the phenomenon as a dynamic process rather than a static object, and as a centre in its wider field, which can have a variety of appearances. Nothing is static, and nothing merely exists on its own. Everything exists also in time, which means it might change; and everything exists in connection to its surrounding, which means its appearances can differ. Hence we have to explore how the phenomenon looks like at different stages of its existence from birth to death and how transitions occur. We also have to pay attention to context and interrelations.

As we begin to use our imagination, we visualise the full circles of life, which a phenomenon goes through; and we pay attention to the context and the cycles in which it is embedded. For example, a plant is not only the plant how we perceive it on the day of our observation. This is just its expression at a certain point in a particular moment and location. This plant is a being in time; it emerges from a bud, which has come out of a sprout out of pollen that came from a plant, and so forth. The plant is present in all the stages, and all the stages are present in one single plant, as they are in all plants.

Hazelnut: Stages in Time

In case of place or building we might imagine how phenomenon emerged in the past, how the place might have been when it was a landscape without human impact, what was the intention of the builders,

the purpose of the object, and what was its factual use or different uses in different times, how the substance changed or was changed over time, in order to see the phenomenon as a whole. Another movement in time is the change depending on the time of the day, and over the seasons. I also gather images and stories from people who populate the space. Research in archives or libraries, if available, can support the process. I look at the place as a holon within a cityscape or a landscape, a centre within a greater continuum, and at the people as part of an evolving community.

Seeing in Beholding

The Greek term 'theory' means 'to behold'. To make our experience true theory, to deeply understand, to make sense of the facts we hold the phenomenon in our mind 'as well as in the external world'. We envision it repeatedly, and we let our subconscious work. The study changes focus from exterior to interior and from appearance towards meaning. *Seeing in Beholding* can be interpreted as a contemplative inquiry.

Piazza del Campo: Detail

In this stage we have ideally stopped imposing our preconceptions on the phenomenon; we have ceased judging. We allow for absolute openness as to what the phenomenon itself reveals. We do not impose thought constructs, ideas, judgements or expectations. Preferably empty-minded, we enter the dimension of the phenomenon. We get closer and deepen the relationship with the phenomenon to an advanced stage. Returning to my previous comparison to meeting people: we started off by small talking and are now at a point of being friends when most of the information on the person has been shared, and now we begin to be able to have deeper conversations, share joy and pain, become able to be quiet with each other. Most phenomena cannot talk verbally. Hence entering the dimension of the phenomenon means that we have to find an appropriate means of communication.

This can be again art as a different way of knowing that helps us enter the non-objective, intuitive mode of perception. Art can support us to 'get the mind out of the way'. Any kind of artistic expression can do it: drawing, painting, poetry, music, dance or storytelling in order inspire the phenomenon with our artistic cognition, and to be inspired to call forth and to perceive the true nature of the phenomenon. Beside that I feel that it is also a way of expressing my reverence towards the phenomenon.

Seeing in Beholding is a process, not a stage with exactly defined beginning and end. It can take time. It takes patience and trust. We cannot force intuition into a certain speed. Meaning will reveal itself when the time is right. We have to accept what is given; the process and the result are unpredictable.

Becoming One with the Phenomenon

The openness we have built up over the previous stages can now allow for the change into the intuitive mode of consciousness, for going deeply into the phenomenon (rather than beyond), for deep insights about the archetypal nature of the phenomenon, its *Wesen* or essence, its potentials. We can experience a connection, a relationship *in* the phenomenon which Goethe called *das Gesetz* (the law). And we can experience the unity of and with the phenomenon, a unity that is not evident to sensory experience, feeling or thought, because it is beyond all of those.

The phenomenon reveals itself. The recognition of meaning can result in awe and wonder for the phenomenon. This moment, this flash of insight is hard to miss; you will know when you are there. It is the moment of knowing with your heart. It often goes along with a significant bodily sensation. Depending on the depth of the engagement, and the personal ability to let go of the influences of ones mind *Becoming One with the Phenomenon* can become truly a moment of connecting with the universe, a moment of knowing to the core that everything is interdependently connected, rather of merely believing it with our mind. It then does not make any difference if the being that we connect with is a plant, a person or a place. In that stage lies the chance that the phrase *Being One*, the concept of *Oneness*, becomes a reality beyond words. The landscape, the city, the place becomes a gate to the interior of our

own consciousness, which can be an experience some call 'luminous'.

Rebirth in Siena, water colour, 2007

This outline of the Goethean method is not a fixed template. As to my own studies, I need to admit that I have never managed to firmly stick to the guide. If you use it as your manual that is fine but you have to be aware that it might alter according to who you are, and what the phenomenon you study asks for. The process is unpredictable. But the Goethean way of science can make science as well as place assessment an adventure.

SYMBOLISM IN THE INTERIOR RESPONSE TO PHENOMENA

Apparently, the contemplative part of the inquiry often results in the generation of symbolism and archetypal imagery on the interior screen. Symbols that emerged before my inner eye in this phase of my holistically oriented study of the Campo in Siena were the pearl, the shell and the pentagram, each of which in one way or another turned out to conform to the simultaneously received insights on the Campo and Siena as a whole, and thus seemed to confirm those. They also led to a deeper understanding of the place.

The Pentagram

Symbol researcher Rene Guenon (Guenon, 1962) believed that symbols are thought, expressed in form, and there is a harmony between the sign and the signified. He also said, the subject of symbolism is a higher order of reality; the symbol is of a lower order than its subject. Symbolism is a means of raising ourselves to the knowledge of the divine truth.

Carl Jung suggested that symbols are representations of complex matters contain as yet unspoken, non-verbal insights which cannot be expressed other than in the language of a symbol (Jung, 1971). While there is certainly the possibility that the imagery and the symbolism is about a place, which I found to be true, and also opens an entrance to another dimension of the phenomenon and ourselves, this other – or what Guenon calls 'higher' – dimension need not necessarily be understood as 'otherworldly' or 'supernatural'.

THE VALIDITY OF THE SUBJECTIVE

I have often been asked if the results of these studies, and particularly the later phase of the contemplative inquiry, are valid in terms of that they can be confirmed and proven by repetition as in empirical science. After repeated discussions I realized that we tried to prove the parts of the holistic approach which were results in the *qualitative-subjective* area in terms of their *quantitative-objective* validity. This, of course, did not work. It cannot be done, because it is a contradiction in terms. Besides, the very existence of objectivity itself can and has been doubted, partly because the observer, or subject, who more or less arbitrarily chooses what to look at and how to look at it, can only see what his individual and the level of their cultural background's collective consciousness allows him to see (Goethe, Scientific Studies; Bortoft, 1996; Wilber, 2000). It has been suggested that the holistic-intuitive approach is scientifically valid in that it conforms to the generally applied criteria of scientific inquiry. Those have been outlined, for instance, by Ken Wilber (Wilber, 2000). The following paragraph is draws on his work.

The Criteria of 'Good' Science

Science cannot be defined by saying that it is exclusively based on empirical research through the senses and their extensions (i.e. measurements of certain devices). For instance, mathematics, the basic tool of any 'hard' science, is an interior reality; it is not an exterior reality, but a tool to describe the exterior; it is a map, not the territory. Scientific knowledge is generally grounded in an attitude of honesty, in collaborative inquiry, and in evidence – i.e. experiments, which are supposed to be repeatable and, under the same conditions, generate the same

results. There is no differentiation between the so-called 'hard' sciences, i.e. physics or chemistry and the human sciences such as psychology or the cognitive sciences. Scientific inquiry is defined by three factors:

1. *A practical injunction or exemplar*: a subject comes up; a question is being asked. One way or another, we need to somehow engage with the subject: through experiment, injunction, or a social practice, to find out.

2. *An apprehension, illumination, or experience.* In the practical engagement with the world, a set of experiences will occur, that is, out of the contact with the subject of the inquiry, data are generated: physical data from physical experiences, mental data from mental experiences or spiritual data from spiritual experiences. All good science is based on data, or experiential evidence. (The meaning of *Datum* is *immediate experience,* as Wilber cites William James)

3. *Communal checking (Either rejection or confirmation)* The generated outcomes have to be reviewed, checked, and rejected or confirmed by other researchers, i.e. a group of peers, which performs or has performed the experiment/injunction under the same conditions as the original. In the case of the repeatability of the outcome the validity is confirmed, otherwise it is falsified.

In most cases, this method leads to reliable knowledge, at least temporarily.

The Goethean method includes the exterior/objective domain of phenomena (as in the Exact Sense Perception) but continues towards a qualitative-intuitive research (throughout all stages), which also includes the interior/subjective domain. In search for truth, it so goes beyond the mere objective research, experience, and generation of data, i.e. evidence, as Bortoft (Bortoft, 1996) has extendedly examined and illuminated. Beyond that, Goethe himself was very firm on the subject of peer group verification of scientific knowledge.

The Interior Data

However, the point in question here remains the reliability, validity, and truth of the whole range of events and visions, which emerge on the interior plane during the contemplative part of the inquiry. As group studies have shown, those can be of quite a wide variety, in spite of the same conditions which all participants shared. On closer consideration there are, often but not always, common features as to their essential meaning. *'...whereas surfaces or exteriors can be seen, interiors must be interpreted.'* (Wilber, 1995, 2000)

On the subject of experiences within the interior domain, Ken Wilber suggests that if one immerses oneself into the practice of contemplative inquiry, sooner or later one arrives at the experience of events and visions within the interior domain: same conditions, same result. As meditators throughout cultures, religious traditions and history have widely confirmed, after an extended practice of contemplation the experience of unity or oneness (whether the contemplated subject is a physical, mental or spiritual phenomenon) will occur, provided a similar level of consciousness development has been reached, that is the researchers share the same conditions in their experiments (Wilber, 2000).

Wilber also addresses the subject of sincerity of participants. Obviously, not all participants are truthful in their statements about their experiences. There remains a risk that somebody is lying (for whatever personal or psychological reason). Occasionally the person is not even aware of this fact because s/he might also be a victim of self-deception. In that instance, the group work Goethe proposed is of the essence. The interior plane is a new territory for many participants, and group sharing can also serve to give reassurance as to that people are not merely fantasizing. The interior experiences need to be checked against those of others, the imagery and its interpretation put into the context of the holistic-intuitive study.

Effects on People, Place and Researcher

Working with the Goethean holistic-intuitive method has had effects on several levels:

- Researcher and participants gain an in-depth understanding of the place which further deepens their relationship to the place, i.e. environment, landscape, or cityscape, and nature as whole.
- Practicing a different way of perception can lead participants and researcher towards a new, deeper, wider, higher level of consciousness.

That means, we learn about ourselves as much as we learn about the subject of our study.

I have worked with people of a variety of backgrounds: students, ecologists, artists, community activists, psychologists, designers, and housewives. Generally, it can be noted that people involved in holistic-intuitive approaches to place (or any other phenomenon) report a change of perspective: the process of turning from an observer into a participant of an interactive communication with place is often deeply felt. Participants learn to pay more attention to the full range of their senses rather than primarily to the visual; and previously unconscious judgements that have been obstructing the vision begin to come to light. Studies mostly result in a higher awareness for the conditions and needs of places, a rising feeling of

responsibility and commitment as well as a growing ability and desire to take the right action. As, for instance, architects have repeatedly reported (Alexander, 2002; Day, 2003), the key function of architects and planners might move from being experts of 'top-down' design towards being facilitators of consensus processes. Community members tend to take more care of a surrounding created with their participation. Community awareness can rise. Changing perspective changes people. Reverence towards place, nature and people and the built environment can arise. As for myself, along with many other people, working with the Goethean method opened a door from the rational domain into the intuitive, a doorway to personal growth and expansion of consciousness.

Places have more to transmit than we generally consciously notice. Places and the layers that I resonate with continue to teach me what they are and who we are as human beings. Places have memories, in a sense of a place-specific essential meaning, spirit and soul. Some places turn out to be suitable to build on, while the situation of others might ask for reconsideration. Good design, which responds to the demands of place, nature, earth, and people, arises out of communication. It then is original, place-specific and diverse, enduring and probably environmentally sound, which may be more economic in the long term. The return of local differences and authenticity could perhaps reverse the trend towards global uniformity. Beyond the assessment of place, the Goethean method can also inform the design process.

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