

## *A Voice of Anthroposophy*

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*Unancestral Voice* by Owen Barfield (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1965).

There is a new book out to enjoy and to pass on to friends. A fascinating yarn, ruggedly honest, and as tough going in spots as any lawyer, physicist, theologian, or better-world liberal would want. Owen Barfield brings an extraordinary assortment of gifts: a steel-trap legal mind, a poet's link with the spirit of speech, and an uncanny eye for people. And he is able to weave it together in a haunting story pattern. One can understand Wesleyan University Press being willing to risk the off-beat substance, the anthroposophy. More writers of this caliber and artistry, and what a different, what an other world it would be! For those, that is, who belong to the future, and search out the seed-points of things to come.

Barfield has done half a dozen volumes on language, history, and the evolution of consciousness as reflected in the human being's ways of using thought. *Worlds Apart*, the most recent, was a study of watertight mental compartments among professionals. A delightful weekend dialogue-war, one that can be read aloud for the sheer joy of the characterizations, the Babel of separate tongues in current disciplines. *Unancestral Voice* carries on. Burgeon, the lawyer-linguist host, again tells the story. The dialogue continues, but stepped up. The problem: the creative mind's relation to its own source of illumination. And isn't this the gist of Rudolf Steiner's contribution? Must not the productive person of today find an individual voice of ideas? Isn't this the survival question?

The topics and themes we must leave to the reader's adventure. But one point deserves mention. The composition of ideas treated is beautifully

organic, living. The book grows. It roots in raw social facts, such as the swamp of sexuality seeping into culture, the delinquency of kids without tradition and authority during the time they need to respect it, and crime and the virulence of the pro and con among those who would meet it. After the facts, come the riddles of time and evolution and the actual meaning of history—changes in human beings from age to age. The book culminates then on the blossoming of the human spirit, the crisis today in science, in thinking. The outlook is dim or radiant depending on how we choose. And the choice—there's no question there—is prejudice or insight. Openness to new ideas. The result of such an unfolding development of thoughts is the aftereffect on the reader. Because of the viable form, they can live on and work. The book digests well.

As a storytelling device we are introduced to 16th century Maggidism. A little known biography of Joseph Karo is quoted. A lawyer-mystic in whom the voice of the angel spoke. Burgeon's source of intuitive ideas progressively grows objective, becomes a dialogue within the mind. He personifies it. In this way anthroposophy, the knowledge that the spirit of the human being generates to lead into the spirit of the world, can be introduced in novel form. And it has charm. The Meggid, as he names the entity, is lovable. And he or she (one is not sure which) is often provoked by Burgeon's thick-headedness. One thing this sort of device permits is to show in picture form the stages by which the intuitive process develops. First, in the quiet of the morning hours the Voice speaks. Speaks in pure thought, which must be translated into awkward earth words. After various courtings and encounters, it sinks deeper. During the history discourse on shipboard (taking off from Toynbee) Burgeon really "gets going." He is surprised at his own eloquence and learning, begins to realize he's been helped in the debate on theology and timelessness. A third phase comes in the crisis among the scientists in the lecture hall. Burgeon's young friend has been worked into a corner during his lecture on the crisis in micro-physics. Can inspiration work at a distance ... as a field-effect? It is a dramatic moment, especially for the future of science. So runs the illumination of the man Burgeon.

There will be difficulties for some. The language is pure English. The provenance of the substance is Steiner's German. Much seems strange at first until one remembers that for good translation the writer must return to the same sources from which the original stemmed: the idea. But this more or less is the theme of the book. Perhaps the science of things of the spirit will first flourish here on the wings of the Western world. The Meggid as angel of the Logos would care for that.

Another difficulty may be raised for others. That of acknowledgment of source. In *Worlds Apart*, Sanderson does acknowledge at length and sharply his Steinerian source, and wrestles with the question of how long an idea or perception must live in you before it becomes indigenous. Here Steiner goes unmentioned, although the Meggid on the final page reveals itself as the voice of *anthroposophia*. Does this separate the teachings from the name? But the writer stands by his lifework. A novel emerges from the man. What one has experienced in one's fibers is one's own. And the source stands written in broad script for all with the sense to see.

For members and friends the book has special value. The language of anthroposophy was re-formed every decade during Steiner's life. It was part of his genius to achieve this. Today too, to live and work, spirit must find new formulations. For study-circles and talk-sessions we've been provided with a fine challenge to learn how anthroposophy can sound in the 60's and 70's. And how it can be spoken to and be received by ears attuned to the patois of the day.