

Working with the Triptychon I

Gemma Priess and Rita Weber-Wied

Triptycho Vertikale

1

*Una tachadura en el texto
crucifica la escritura,
se parece a la muerte.
La muerte también es
una tachadura en el texto.*

*Pero todo lo tachado
hace resaltar otra cosa.
¿Qué cosa resaltaría
si se tachara todo el texto?*

2

*¿Quién toma en mí la
iniciativa
cuando no estoy en mí?
¿Quién sueña cuando sueño?
¿Quién me despierta en la
nada?
¿Quién cultiva mis ojos de no
ver?*

*Somos solo invitados
en nuestra propia casa.
Pero nos dolerá dejarla,
como si fuéramos los dueños.*

3

*¿Cómo se junta un
pensamiento
con otro pensamiento?
¿Cómo se juntan
todos los pensamientos de un
hombre?
¿Cómo se juntan los
pensamientos
de todos los hombres?*

*A veces sentimos
que todo el pensar es un solo
caudal
que mueve la rueda
de un único Molino.*

Roberto Juarroz

Spaces without space

Gemma Priess

I had just completed my continuing education course in Biography Work with Karl-Heinz Finke when I took part in my first International Biography Conference in 2007 in Rolduc, Netherlands. I was eager to discover the wider field of biography work and landed in a workshop session with Rinke Visser. Rinke gave a short introduction to his work with the Triptychon. After this workshop I knew I wanted to connect more deeply with this work!

What touches me personally so deeply in the Triptychon? Christine Pflug wrote about the 'Artistic Eye and Thinking' in the St. John's edition of this magazine (Zeitschrift für Biografiearbeit, Nr.6). Grateful for her article I quote the following by Rudolf Steiner: "And only by gradually getting used to thinking in images instead of words will we come nearer to the spiritual world."

(GA 350, p.94)

During many years in my primary profession as a painter and a writer I considered this the theme and purpose of my work. My research question was: How does the path lead from Idea (in the spiritual world) towards the Form (earthly reality)? To this end I made the topic of my art (writing as well as my sculptures and Installations) into the artistic process of my art.

In this process I discovered three non-physical spaces. The Argentinian poet Roberto Juarroz created the concept of "espacios sin espacio - spaces without space." I will refer to his definition in my text.

In the Triptychon I again meet these three spaces without space:

1. The space between the one who 'walks' the Triptychon and the one who accompanies the other.
2. The space between the individual events (biographical) that are being focused on.
3. The space between those events and the impulse toward the incarnation (our life).

I shall add here the fact that I again and again experience how much value comes from the artistic activity, the painting and writing as well as the artistic observation of the resulting art work. By this kind of observation I mean an observation that allows the phenomena themselves to speak. The Triptychon also uses this form of observation. Three life events are being chosen and a picture (image) is created that then becomes the focus of an observation process on several levels.

The impulse to go deeper into this process lead me in 2008 to Hamburg where Rinke Visser offered a Triptychon seminar demonstrating the form that he found originally for this process. I took this form to my next work (study) weekend to my three colleagues Karla Haenisch, Ineke van der Duyn Schouten and Rita Weber-Wied. We now connected deeper to the work and practiced the steps, experimented with variations and all in all, set out to understand the Triptychon in deeper ways. Later on other colleagues joined us and each time new experiences, view points as well as, questions, arose.

In 2009 I met the second version of the Triptychon through Rinke Visser. From this experience resulted an intensive dialogue about the Gestalt and Being of the Triptychon. My earlier impulse, to enter deeper into this process became reality thanks to Rinke Visser and the colleagues and clients that gave me the opportunity to work with them.

At this moment I feel it is time to enable colleagues in Germany to more easily connect to the Triptychon work in order to make it available in Biographywork. The fact that I have my colleague Rita Weber-Wied by my side enables us to take this step. In the following pages we will offer a sketch of the first Triptychon version. The second version will be introduced in the Easter Edition of this magazine. In the coming year, we will offer two seminars for colleagues who wish to work with the Triptychon.

Pathways between Images - Touching into the Spaces without Space

Rita Weber-Wied and Gemma Priess

There are many possibilities to work in fruitful ways with the Triptychon: one-on-one or group work, in therapy or in organizational development. As well, the variations of how to approach and go through a Triptychon process are as manifold as the human beings engaging in it. The Triptychon arises always between the one who is being accompanied and the one who accompanies.

It is therefore not so easy to answer the question as to what it is and how it is done. If someone wants to understand what a tree is, they have to get up and move, find a tree, observe it and describe it in many different ways from different viewpoints. If others come along one might be lucky in that one's personal perceptions might be broadened and widened. Whosoever has begun this kind of a journey in observation, knows that there are nearly infinite amounts of sense perceptions alone. And yet at this stage we look at 'only' the outer appearance of a tree. The question as to what a tree really IS, is far from being answered. Yet after many observations and comparisons of 'tree' one might begin to understand not just the appearance but the Being of Tree.

It is similar with the Triptychon: A definition thereof is impossible but we can share and exchange our experiences. Like the parable that Roberto Juarroz shares:

"All my life I have explained Zen", says Basho, "and yet I never understood it." The response he was given was: "How can you explain something that you yourself don't understand?" "Oh," shouts Basho: "Now I have to explain that also?"

We live in the hope getting more and more accounts from people working with the Triptychon, so that a richer and richer perspective may arise. The Triptychon has developed and changed over the past few years and many more possibilities for its development can be seen and recognized. It is not so much a finite and fixed method but a promising pathway within the field of Anthroposophical Biography work.

1. The Space between human beings; between one who walks through a Triptychon and one who accompanies the other

What applies in general to Biography work and is of particular importance in the Triptychon process, is a living encounter between client and counsellor. It is most important, that both understand each other.

What we mean by that is the idea that the counsellor does not stop at what is being said but that he/she makes it her task to develop a sense for how the other thinks, feels, how he or she may stand in the world, how he or she may meet the world.

"One only learns about the soul world from within, if one is able to be 'materialist with the Materialists', though only for a moment and then, that one may be able to be an Idealist or Spiritualist by trial (...). In doing that, one may experience in such soul constellations the working of destiny forces and recognize why a human being may be pushed toward Materialism or Spiritualism."

(R. Steiner GA 78, p.96)

Out of such striving toward an inner understanding the space for a true meeting can arise. It is that kind of a quality that holds the space in the Triptychon process.

As a facilitator one's sole commitment is toward the client and his or her question that has led to the wish to do this work. It is not about soliciting information or giving advice. The moment one is drawn into a form of curiosity one is singular and no longer on the way together.

As long as it is possible for one to keep the space open then both may together move into the direction of the question. Each one's understanding then becomes a light that shines onto the dark path but illumines it step by step. By this light something may be found.

Many times the client can see and the counsellor is dependent on his or her description. It could also be seen as: a blind man who knows the map of the landscape and a person who can see but knows not the map.

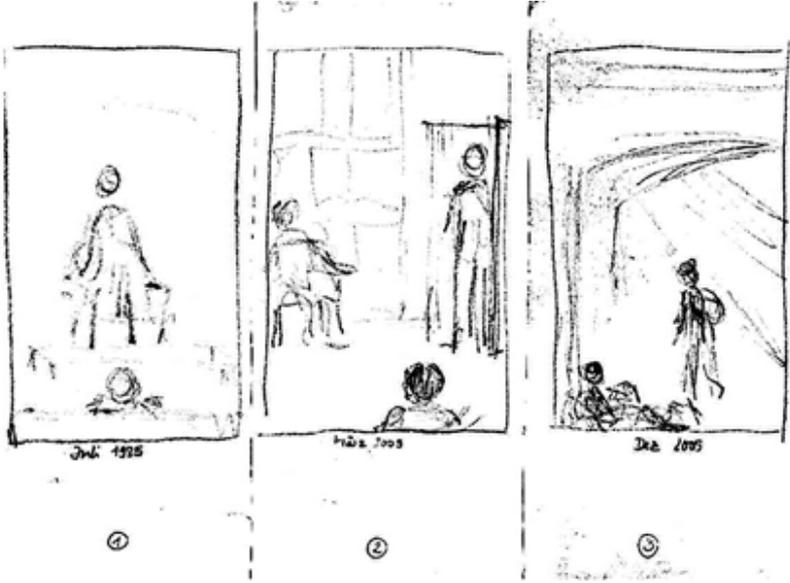
2. The Space between the individual events in life that are being looked at

The starting point

The client's question determines the direction that is taken. Before we can go on the path not only do we need a direction but also a clear starting point. In order to identify this, the client is first asked to find an event in life that is connected with his/her question. The search for this event is intuitively found or identified. This event is then depicted in a drawing, a brief sketch is sufficient. Alongside this first sketch two further events are being identified and drawn. These are then placed to the right and left side of the first one, creating a simple Triptychon.

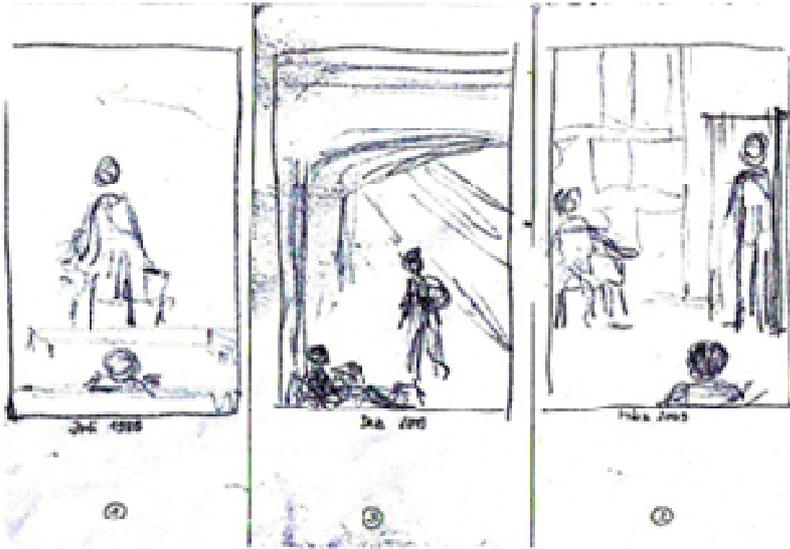
It is now possible to view the Triptychon in the realm of the physical appearances as an image. Both, the individual parts as well as the combination of all three pictures together are now given titles. It is also possible to change the original sequence,

experiment with various orders and see how they speak. The task in this step is for both to get to know the starting point for the journey as intimately as possible and to connect to it with loving interest and warm objectivity.

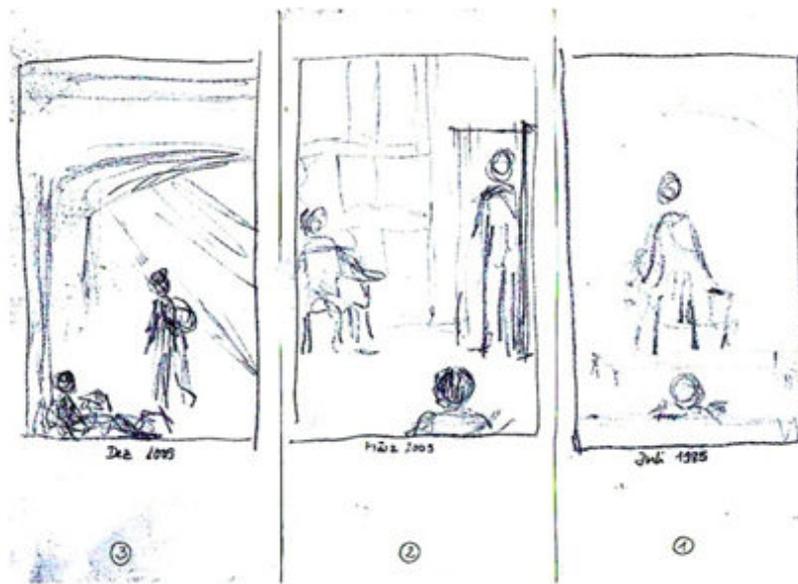


Title: "It is coming" "losing ground" "Hello"

Overall title: "It becomes open."



Overall title: "Connections"



Overall title: "This is how it has to be."

The pictures tell stories, various stories. What they have in common is the client's question. To sense the effect of the various titles can give us a glimpse of the fact that the real events are connected to a series of, at first, invisible levels of meaning.

In changing the sequence of the pictures, we free them of the chronological sequence. Suddenly a childhood event could end up standing at the end of the Triptychon while an adult experience makes the beginning. The connection to the time line is dissolved and now different connections may reveal themselves.

"Just as concepts arising out of a sequential order lead us to physical sense perceptions, so can the dissolution of the chain of this outer time line lead us to a gradual perception of the spiritual world." (R. Steiner, GA 79, p.125)

The pathway

When the story has been found, that is, the sequence determined that makes the most sense in regard to the question that stands at the beginning of the journey, the actual journey can begin. The path leads through a region of the physical, then into an area of the life forces and moods, furthermore through the world of feelings, needs and wishes and finally to the summit of the I am.

Now we have reached a place where we no longer deal with the stories the pictures are telling, but our perception is directed more and more toward the spaces without space, toward what lives between the images.

Just like there exists an invisible space between words or sculptures, so also between the images. This inter-space comes into being through what is visible. The space between for example, a fast moving, dynamic sculpture and a slow moving, static one does not lead to a tempered movement. The words 'hot' and 'cold' next to each other do not come out as 'lukewarm.' Just like when we 'read between the lines' and thereby experience the tension between 'hot' and 'cold' immediately, we can learn to read between the images in the Triptychon.

By walking through the spaces between what appears outwardly, between the pictures, one is able to enter into a deeper and deeper understanding of the events. One can get a glimpse of the true being of something. At the same time it is also possible to touch into new connections and new stories may surface. This is as if one would unveil, step by step, other layers of the appearances.

What happens when all veils are removed?

Here begins a kind of 'groping thinking' where the attention is directed towards something one cannot see yet. One feels carefully into the space without space and maybe one "actually finds in these spaces without space what one is searching for." (Roberto Juarroz)

3. The Space between impulse and appearance, between the events of life and the impulse for life and for one's incarnation

The creative process begins with an inner impulse, a formless idea and ends in a fixed shape or form, whether it is a poem, a sculpture or a picture. In this way one can also look at life. It begins with an impulse that takes more and more definite form during a life time, a biography. The events in life are the traces of the creative forces, of the life or incarnation impulse. The actual impulse is not in the events but when we observe them as footsteps, these bear testimony for the impulse. Between the person one has become and the person one could become, lives the space without space.

It is with this 'groping thinking' and by concentrating on what isn't yet here, that we may in the Triptychon walk through that space, from which the impulse originates that creates the life events. We could also say that in this process we reverse the creative process, from the work of art to the artist. Here we may 'lift the veil' as Novalis said and: "One person achieved it, to lift the veil of the Goddess of Sais - but what did he see? He saw - miraculously, Himself." (Novalis)

When one has arrived in the place where the ideas, the impulses for one's life are present in living reality, there one may 'turn round' and look at the pictures as if from behind. From this perspective one can come to experience the pictures like a membrane

between the outer situations and the inner impulses. This membrane would show the impact of the meeting of both force fields and through the meeting of these forces the pictures will arise anew.

"When one has placed one foot across the threshold on to the other side and yet one is able to return one will never tread as one did before and slowly will one walk from this to the other side." (Roberto Juarroz)

The Triptychon - a path through the spaces without space:

One answer to the earlier question 'what is the Triptychon' could be: it is a pathway through the spaces without space.

This pathway finds its ground in the meeting-space between the client and the guide. The individual steps of the path, its twists and turns, its co-ordinates arise out of the encounter-space between the pictures.

"One can know a person only when one is able to see how the physical and the soul-spiritual move into each other and how in each organ, in every part of the human being, there is constantly a very intimate interchange, a 'moving in and out of', between the physical and the soul-spiritual." (R. Steiner GA 303 p.102)

The Triptychon is also such a practice.

'Groping thinking' - The path of devotion

Rita Weber-Wied

Similar to Gemma I was enthused and fascinated by the Triptychon from the beginning and also experienced the wish to engage in this work. In our very intensive work together with colleagues I continued to carry the question: How and to whom should we pass on this method? From the writing in this article we can recognize the questions: How to truly understand the Being of the Triptychon? How can one learn this journeying into spaces without space? How can one practice to focus on something that is not yet manifest? How is it possible, not to 'see the landscape but to read the map'? How can 'groping thinking' be characterized? How to practice 'seeing the physical moving in and out of the soul-spiritual?'

At first this seemed to be an almost impossibly large task. Doubts and insecurities were on the path in front of us. What are we doing here? Where have we landed? In which dimensions are we now? In the end it was the Triptychon itself that lead the way and

the idea for a training course arose. The experiences of the last number of years spoke in me and grew new insights. Also, there came requests for this work. When Gemma asked about my willingness to offer a seminar, the answer was already given.

What is very important for me is the experience that this is not about 'finding out' something, but it is about a complete surrender to the question the client has. Sometimes I feel like a child that goes hand in hand with another child on a journey of discovery. Nothing is brought along, except for the trust in one's own capabilities and the courage to take one step at a time into an unknown territory. Everything that becomes visible to us on the path through the Triptychon becomes visible through our journey together, through our meeting, our encounter. In the end it is the gesture of devotion that points the way. Devotion in front of the Question and the Destiny of the one I accompany, devotion in front of the realms through which we move together.

"One should in essence look at the destiny of a human being with a huge inner piety, with deep inner respect, because one stands in front of the world of the Gods, when one is present to the destiny of a single person." (R. Steiner GA 236, p.233)

An Introductory Seminar

We experienced the Triptychon as a valuable adjunct to Biography work and we therefore want to offer a seminar for biography workers. We wish to pass on our experiences and, together with colleagues we would like to practice researching in the spaces without space. The true being of the Triptychon cannot be explained but it reveals itself layer by layer through personal experience and by doing it. Therefore the seminar is in essence practical and hands on. It is about observation, experience and practice.

We will offer the possibility to gather manifold experiences with the Triptychon by working one-on-one and in groups. We hope in this to sensitize our organs for soul observation as well as our capacities to accompany another through the Triptychon.

(This article was published in the German "Zeitschrift für Biografiearbeit", Nr. 8 at Christmas 2012.
Translation by Regine Kurek)