

Working with the Triptychon III

Gemma Priess and Rita Weber-Wied

Meditation to conquer the I Am

*I gaze into the darkness.
In it arises light,
Living light.
Who is this light in the darkness?
It is I myself in my reality!
This reality of 'I'
Does not enter into my earth existence.
I am but an image of it.
But I shall find it once again
When I, with good will for the spirit,
Have passed through the gate of death.*

Rudolf Steiner¹

1. Introduction: One question – Many answers

The work with the Triptychon process opens new and unique possibilities to Biography work and counseling. It is Rinke Visser who has discovered and subsequently developed this process. During the past five years we have deepened our research and development into the Triptychon with a group of colleagues. Meanwhile Biography workers in numerous countries are using it and more development takes place all the time. We have written about our experiences and insights in numbers 8 and 9 of this magazine.

It is our intention to make known and accessible this work with the Triptychon, to all Biography workers and counselors.

In our first article we gave a general overview about this work and also shared our personal experiences and our own connection to it. We realized then that it is an impossible task, to describe the full being of the Triptychon. What is possible though, is to approach the question "What is the Triptychon?" from different angles again and again and so to come nearer to this being. One simple answer is: In a Triptychon we look at three life events, sketch them out and then observe these in various ways. This artistic way of observing leads to a glimpse behind the veil, towards the forces active in the background of the events.

¹ R. Steiner, GA 286, p. 92

“And only by gradually becoming used to thinking in images instead of words is it possible to come near to the spiritual world.”²

A second answer to “What is the Triptychon?” could be: A pathway through three “Spaces without Space” (see previous articles).

1. This describes first the encounter space between the client and the counselor who gives structure and base to the path.
2. Second, the connecting space between the three concrete events in life. In this space the individual steps that are forging this path, come into awareness; its twists and turns and how they relate.
3. Finally, the space of possibilities, the creative tension between the biographical events and one’s wider biographical intention. The journey leads us through this ‘place of possibilities’ and on the way we will meet various other locations.

And there is a further answer: The Triptychon is also a field of practice to “look into one another”. As R. Steiner says: “Only then is it possible to know another human being, if one is capable of seeing how the soul-spiritual and the physical-etheric weave into one another. When it is possible to see in every organ and in the entirety of the organism, the sensitive interpenetration of the physical-etheric and the soul-spiritual...”³

Our second article gives some answers to the question: “How does such a Triptychon journey proceed?” There we describe more precisely the meeting-place, the space of encounter and the space of possibilities. We explain and sketch out the areas one meets and what kinds of actions are required on each step.

In order to give a clear description of the whole process we used the image of a hike into the mountains and back, a journey in seven steps. The seven locations are those of the seven chakras. Preceding this, in our first article we gave a four-step journey through the levels of physical, etheric, astral and I.

Based on this previous work we would now like to present a third possibility to work with the Triptychon, knowing it always is based on three parts or aspects. Our wish is to offer a further perspective on the question of “What is the Triptychon?” Just like in the Triptychon process itself where every level shows a true reality of existence, each one of our answers to the question in turn reveals a step to the answer of the question itself.

² R. Steiner, GA 350, p. 94

³ R. Steiner, GA 303, p.102

2. The Triptychon-Pathway into the Crossing of Thresholds

If we look at this Triptychon journey from the viewpoint of the client, we may describe the following:

2.1 The Triptychon from the viewpoint of the client:

At the beginning stands my question, for example: “How does my professional future look like?” or, “What are the issues in the relationship to a certain person in my life?” Now I am asked to find three events in my life, connected with this question. I do this not out of a rational thinking about a logical follow up of events but by using a kind of intuitive perceptive thinking.

In order to accomplish this I first have to deepen the question inwardly and through intensifying the feelings that are connected to it. Now I transform these feelings into an attentive mood that could also be described as a kind of attentive will. I do this as I turn my inner attention to the past. Most of the time an event arises quickly out of this inward looking mood. Often doubts and misgivings arise and try to cover up that which was found. Since this event has not been found out of my rational reflection, I cannot immediately understand what it is supposed to have to do with my question. We doubt whether it is the ‘right’ event. What is required now is courage, courage to trust my intuition. May be I can tell myself, “If it has nothing to do with my question, I will know sooner or later”. When I have reached that point I can proceed and find two more events in the same way.

When all three events have been found and drawn, I proceed to share them verbally. I do this by first telling only the outer circumstances, then the inner mood. I observe them as I observe three pieces of art work, give them titles and finally, a title to the Triptychon as a whole. I can ‘read’ the pictures in a time line from left to right, like an unfolding story, or I can exchange the images and let other stories come about.

Here too I will need courage to allow a kind of playful process to unfold with some of my biographical events. *My* story turns into *many* stories. The chronological sequence becomes secondary while a theme emerges out of which I gradually recognize that all individual stories hint at one larger story in the background.

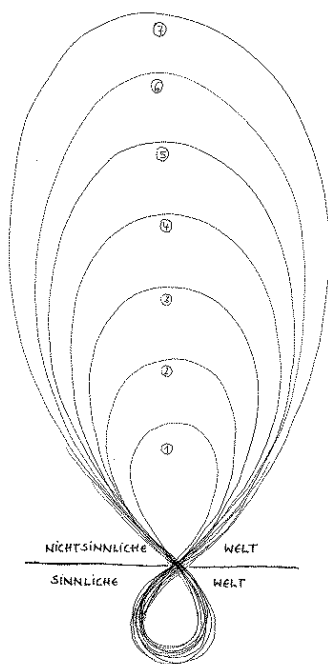
With the help of questions and guidance of my counselor I may slowly enter into the individual themes of this story. On the entry level of looking at my journey I may be asked about my sense of security and insecurity in regards to this my story. So I look at ‘my story’ while at the same time listening into my inner soul space, with this question of insecurity versus security in mind.

At first I only see darkness in front of my inner eye. In order for the inner darkness to become illumined and reveal something to me, I have to change the way I concentrate on what I want to see because for now I don’t see anything yet. Instead of focusing on content I hold a kind of attentive attitude as I see the darkness gradually becoming illumined. Now something reveals

itself that becomes an answer toward the question that my facilitator has asked. I may have to work on finding the right words and create a translation of what I received.

Even when I have spoken the words, I will listen and hear again intimately, testing whether what I have said sounds right and is complete. I can only take a next step, be ready for a further question, when I have received confirmation of the rightfulness of the previous step.

Every step taken brings me the experience of moving between two worlds, the inner one, where I find the answers to the questions and the outer one into which I place my answers. With every step I cross a threshold between visible and invisible worlds.



Drawing 1: Crossing the Threshold between visible and invisible world.

Every one of these steps requires courage because every time I step into the unknown. Only when I stand there can I place my attention into this unknown field and become familiar with it. The deeper the trust in my guide, the stronger my ability to extend my glance into the unknown.

Every answer I find shows me another layer of the events. It is as if with each question that my guide is asking, we actually go deeper inside and this too requires courage and strength. Feelings also arise and if I want to recognize them I have to choose to look at them. It could be that illusions I have about myself require my willingness to step even deeper into my inner abyss. It may become narrower and threatening and I surely will even meet fear. At the same time I al-

ways know that I'm really 'only' looking at three life events and my own life question. Rationally speaking there is no real danger though my feelings may speak differently. If I can sense the presence of my guide now, I am able to experience inner strength to remain on the path that I don't know.

Eventually we reach the level of the fourth chakra and this moment is best described by the following poem by Jan Skacel:

*Alles schmerzt sich einmal durch bis auf den eignen Grund
und die Angst vergeht
schön die Scheune die nach längst vergangnen Ernten
leer am Wegrand steht.⁴*

*Everything eventually pains itself through, down to the ground of one's being,
and fear departs.*

*How beautiful is the barn, after harvests long past,
standing empty by the roadside.*

Until now I had the experience of diving into the events as well as into myself deeper and deeper. Now I am getting a further experience as I am looking both, at 'experience' and 'self' as if from the periphery. The questions of my councilor lead me in this wide world of the periphery around myself and around the events.

Following on from here, we bring the answers we found in the periphery closer towards the pictures. I see once more myself and the others in my drawings. I see the dramas of everyday life depicted here, the pain, the fears and the unfulfilled wishes and longings that the people in those drawings are suffering from. Watching them in this way I experience empathy but also an unpleasant feeling of narrowness or tightness. Here in the periphery of the happenings I can feel so free, whereby connected to the events I felt un-free.

Again I now need courage, when my councilor asks me whether I am willing to return back into this life to which the three events belong. Can I say yes to these events, exactly the way they took place? Can I say yes to the un-loved qualities in me, which now come towards me again?

⁴ From: „Wundklee“, Fischer Verlag, aus dem Tschechischen von Reiner Kunze.
Many thanks to Christopher Bee for the help with the translation into English!

While I ask myself these questions I become aware of the fact that I learned a huge amount on my way through the Triptychon and found many answers that I can take with me on my way now and that will help me. Yes! Now I will want to return!

Now my guide reminds me of the question that stood at the beginning of my journey. As I read this question again and hear it spoken by her/him, I realize, the question has changed. I now have to formulate it differently.

Now I can re-enter again into the events and bring everything with me that I learned through my journey of the Triptychon. I sense my need for change. I get ideas how I could act differently in similar situations next time. Finally the intention for a concrete step is born in me.

When my therapist/guide welcomes me back and asks me how I'm doing I notice that I'm a little shaky and even fragile. I am invited to engage in an art process and that helps me to integrate the full experience.

And what about my Question? As I re-view everything that I have put into words while journeying I realize that what I have brought back from the journey are all possible answers to my original question, each one from a different angle.

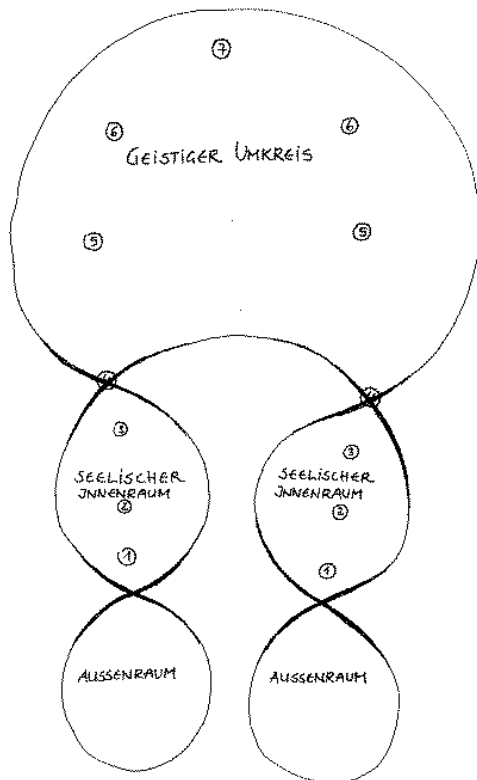
2.2 Inside becomes outside - outside becomes inside

Looking from the client's point of view one definition of the Triptychon could be: A trial of courage. Again and again it is the task to find the courage and the strength to cross thresholds. As we described earlier, there is the threshold between the perceptible and the super sensible world. Here we must constantly cross back and forth in both directions. This somehow describes the way one moves through a Triptychon: back and forth.

While moving forward in this manner one will experience a four-fold transformation, like a turning inside out, an inversion:

1. When crossing from the outer space into the inner soul space and its three fields.
2. When moving through the fourth field, from soul space to the field of spirit.
3. When entering the return journey: from the fourth level which is the spirit field back into the soul realm.
4. When stepping back out from the inner soul space into the outer physical reality.

This makes the Triptychon also a threshold journey.



Drawing 2: The fourfold inversion

3. The Triptychon - A Journey through the inverted space

The further one lives into the qualities of the seven realms of the Triptychon, the deeper will be the experiences one can have. One can develop a perception for the structure of its reality and how each step follows the next one.

If one can inwardly live into the fourth inverted space it is possible to 'see' into the three realms of the one and also of the other side. One can realize now, that in fact each pair creates a metamorphosis.

This may be demonstrated in the meditative verse by Rudolf Steiner⁵ that we introduced in the previous article. The content of the first three lines returns transformed in the last three lines while the fourth place is the moment of inversion, transformation.

⁵ R. Steiner, GA 268, p. 15 and GA 256, p. 16ff

1) *In dem Sondersein entdecke das Gesetz:
denn das Gesetz wov der erste der Sieben in
den Stoff.*

2) *In der Bewegung entdecke das Leben:
denn das Leben goss der zweite der Sieben in
den Stoff.*

3) *In dem Verlangen entdecke die Person:
denn die Person prägte der dritte der Sieben
in den Stoff.*

4) *In dem Gedanken entdecke Dich:
denn dem Ich schenkte der vierte der Sieben
sein Selbst.*

5) *In deinem Verlangen entdecke die Entsa-
gung:
denn durch die Entsagung opferte sich der
fünfte der Sieben,
auf dass du selbst seiest.*

6) *In deiner Bewegung entdecke die selige
Ruhe:
denn die selige Ruhe opferte der sechste der
Sieben, auf dass du als Selbst lebend dich be-
wegst.*

7) *In deinem Sondersein entdecke dein ewiges
Gesetz:
Denn als ewiges Gesetz hat der siebente der
Sieben dein Selbst in Sonderheit geschaffen,
und wird es als ewiges Gesetz aus der Son-
derheit führen.*

1) *Discover the archetype (lawfulness) in the
individual expression:
It is this lawfulness the first of the seven wove
into the substance.*

2) *Discover Life in Movement:
It is this life force the second of the seven
poured into the substance.*

3) *Discover personhood in desire:
It is the seed of the human being the third of
the seven impressed into substance.*

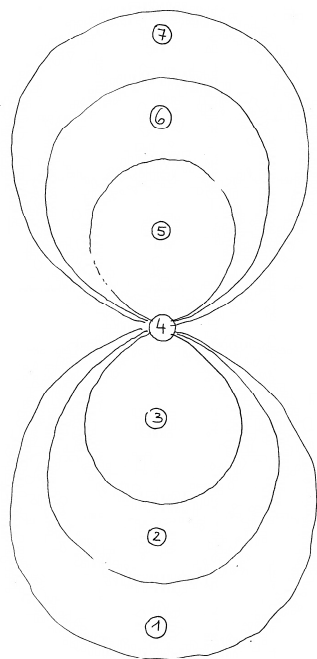
4) *In thought discover the Self
It is the I the fourth of the seven endowed up-
on the Self.*

5) *In your desire discover sacrifice:
It is through sacrifice the fifth of the seven let
go so you may come into being.*

6) *In your movement discover holy calm:
It is in the sacrifice by the sixth of the seven of
this holy calm that you yourself may live and
move as an enlivened being.*

7) *In your individual being discover the arche-
typal being:
For as eternal lawfulness the seventh of the
seven has created your Self in its separate ex-
istence and will also lead it from this separa-
tion back to the (eternal) archetype.*

Looking from here the seven realms reveal three interpenetrating lemniscates whereby the crossing point is the fourth place.



Drawing 3: The mirrored spaces

Three areas are below, three above the middle. The crossing point in the center separates as well as connects the first with the seventh space, the second with the sixth, and the third with the fifth. In the fourth space we meet the transformation that also creates the prerequisite for the entry into the three upper areas and equally when coming from above also the re-entry into the lower spaces.

Each time when moving inwardly through this crossing point of the lemniscate one meets the point of loss of the previous space and while the new is not showing itself yet, one is neither inside nor outside but in-between.

The qualities of the fourth chakra help us here to be able to meet and make it through this turning point. One of the qualities required, as Rudolf Steiner characterizes it, is the ability and willingness of complete surrender:

“Let’s imagine this mood of selfless surrender into the inner soul reality, then we have with this mood what we would like to bring closer to our understanding, which is a form of higher insight (knowledge) that we could never reach without this kind of reverence. Those who are never able to cultivate this kind of a mood of reverence will not ever reach a higher level of consciousness.”⁶

⁶ R. Steiner, GA 132, p. 28

We already previously sketched out the qualities of the seven regions. We will now focus on the transformation of the corresponding pairs.

3.1 Journey from the first to the seventh region - outer form meets inner force

When describing the qualities of the seven regions in the last article, we used everyday situations for this. Experiences that best show the first region come from moments just before falling asleep. One can experience at times a moment of panic, fear of losing oneself or even to dissolve altogether. On the journey from the first to the seventh region this experience can also be present. To fall asleep one needs to let go of the bodily consciousness.

In the Triptychon journey one is required to let go of the sense perceptible reality and be willing to sacrifice the hold on rational thinking without falling asleep. At this moment, at the place between the first and seventh region, this fear of losing oneself, falling asleep or even a fear of death, may be met. If it is possible to strengthen one's own forces in such a way so that one finds inner strength, one will find it possible to overcome this fear of annihilation and one is able to let go of the physical reality. Out of this 'sacrifice' will it be possible to then go on the path in search of the living powers behind the outer world events.

3.2 The second to the sixth region - movement of life meets living stillness

In order to become familiar with the second region we introduced the experience one can have in the water when swimming. When first learning to swim one is furthest from such an experience. At this point our feet want to seek the connection to the ground, fear again arises to lose ground, to drown and our movement tends to be hectic and chaotic. Again we meet the same fear on the threshold between the second and sixth region. When swimming, as long as this wild and hectic movement prevails, one is indeed in danger of drowning. Only when it is possible to calm down can one notice that the water actually carries us even in stillness and without movement at all.

To relate this to our Triptychon journey: when aspiring to go from the second to the sixth region, we must strengthen the forces of trust and surrender to this same degree. If this is achieved one may be 'inspired' and find new and often surprising answers to one's earlier question.⁷

3.3 The third to the fifth region - personal power meets objective truth

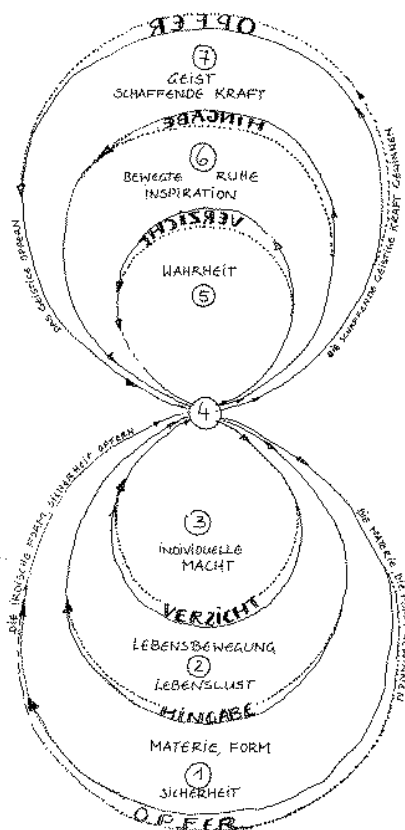
Awareness of situations for which one has a burning desire or interest, can help us to move into the realm of the third region. One feels here the force of one's own will power and strength; one is in touch with one's inner fire. This can lead also to the strongest feelings of powerless-

⁷ Inspiration in the sense of 'creative insight' or 'a sudden idea' or 'illuminating thought' is described here.

ness, especially if obstacles are present. Such experiences of powerlessness and accompanying fears are also emerging in the realm between the third and the fifth region. In our description of the fifth sphere we previously mentioned the power of a kind of resolve through a 'wise word' spoken at the right moment in a conflict situation for example. It can pin point the crucial meaning and essence of a situation. As a facilitator, to be able to speak such words, to apply an ability to be absolutely selfless, is necessary. That's why this is easier for 'outsiders' to speak such words. To reach from the third into the fifth region one has to be able to surrender any personal attachment to outcome. It lies in this ability that a higher truth may be revealed and become visible.

3.4 Into the fourth region - Love and Death

The fourth region is the separation as well as, the connection between, the related realms. When observing them in three separate lemniscates one has to cross through the fourth realm each time when moving from one to the other related sphere.



Drawing 4: Metamorphosis of the regions

In order to continue on our journey, with each step we are required to leave something behind or peel something off: This will be our worldly security between the first and seventh region; our urge for life and movement in the space between the second and the sixth; finally it will be our personal power in the region between the third and fifth sphere. We feel this as an experience of a small death each time we pass through the fourth region.

The qualities of fear we meet are also threefold: Fear of emptiness and dissolution in the space between the first/seventh region; fear of bottomless depth in the space between the second/sixth region and fear of powerlessness in the space between the third/fifth regions.

Each and every passing through can be called a trial. Each time inner strength is required. First: Power of sacrifice, second: Power of surrender and third: Power of total admonition of need. If this is achieved these three forces are able to lead the soul beyond the earthly-physical to a spiritual reality. In this way the Triptychon can also become a meditation.

Now we see that the region of the heart chakra is not just the region of Love but also that of earthly death into heavenly birth as well as that of earthly birth out of heavenly death.

With the help of threefold powers of love may we transform death so that death is not the end of life but leads to birth on the other side.

4. The Triptychon - A Schooling Path

In his lecture “How can the Destitution of Soul in Modern Times be overcome?”⁸ Rudolf Steiner says:

“Understanding the social question, freedom of thought and spirit cognition are the three big aims, they could even be called the main impulse of the fifth post-atlantean cultural epoch. It is under these lights that we have to evolve, these are the rightful lights shining at our development.”

We practice the beginnings of these enormously big capacities every time we walk the Triptychon. Every time we manage to look at events and all persons involved in it with loving glance, we transcend personal attachments and grow social capacities and also develop understanding of wider karmic connections.

⁸ R. Steiner, GA 168, p. 113

Every time we succeed in freeing ourselves from our fixed mental images and reach out to the 'creative force field' that lies behind the physical events of time, we practice freedom of thought and spirit cognition.

In the sheaths of our soul lie the doorways, the thresholds between the earthly and spiritual realities. Through the Triptychon work we can open those doorways and live more and more in a connection between the two separate worlds.

This way we can see the Triptychon as part of the schooling path that R. St. gave us. We practice with this process social conscience, freedom of thought and spiritual cognition. These are important and necessary capacities for the development towards the consciousness soul.

5. Looking further ahead

All of this does by far not exhaust the work with the Triptychon. It seems to be a phenomenon of the Triptychon that, the deeper one goes the more it reveals and the more manifold becomes its reality. There is ongoing research on this process and we are confident of the fact that further regions within the invisible realities of life will be discovered.

The one thing that seems to be shared by all possible ways of journeying through the Triptychon is the experience or reality of an 'inside out', an awareness of point-periphery, of earthly-spiritual interwoven worlds, a cognition of the law of inversion.

This article was first published in the German "Zeitschrift für Biografiearbeit", 2013. Translation by Regine Kurek. Thank you so much!

© Gemma Priess: info@biografieberatung.eu and Rita Weber-Wied: weberwied@gmx.de