

The Resurrection of Speech
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Logos

Why wonder about the loaves and fishes?
If you say the right words, the wine expands.
If you say them with love
and the felt ferocity of that love
and the felt necessity of that love,
the fish explode into the many.
Imagine him, speaking
and don't worry about what is reality,
or what is plain, or what is mysterious.
If you were there, it was all those things.
If you can imagine it, it was all those things.
Eat, drink, be happy.
Accept the miracle.
Accept too, each spoken word
spoken with love.

— Mary Oliver

Marjorie Spock's concept of Goethean Conversation derives from the questions asked of the snake by the king in Goethe's *The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily*:

“Whence came you hither?” asked the golden king.
“Out of the clefts where gold dwells,” replied the serpent.
“What is more glorious than gold?”
“Light!”
“What is more quickening than Light?”
“Conversation!”[\[1\]](#)

The form of conversation that Marjorie Spock is asking us to strive towards in her essay is achievable in both formal and informal (spontaneous) settings. However, this requires forming the right relationship with both speaking and listening, developing speaking from a place of intuitive listening, and developing listening with a gesture of love for the speaker's soul. Both speaker and listener prepare to hear the words of the spiritual world and recognize that conversation, the exchange of words, is an act of creation, willing and spiritual attunement. Conversation requires attunement between speaker, listener, and the spiritual world. Developing a living thinking, so that we can hold an image of the spiritual world as leading the way and actively participating with our conversation, enlivens and resurrects our conversation.

How do we approach conversation?

Is not conversation, in its ideal, the movement of soul that occurs in the speaking and the listening, in the alchemical transformation of the word, uttered and heard, into a synergistic and sympathetic experience of an idea and its universal ideal? Do we not “begin to hear through the words, into the other person’s soul”?^[2] In the word, is there not both willing and creation –the creative willing of expressing that which moves us to speech and that which moves us, willingly, to the willful activity of listening?

Like Parzival, where speech and action are first guided by the advice of his mother and “the teaching[s] of older, grey-haired men”^[3], our speech is frequently unfree, determined by codes and rules imposed by others. In this unfree state, we fail in intuitive listening, and in not hearing the spiritual world, our speech derives from external laws. Like Parzival, we can miss the opportunity where our speech can bring about transformation and healing.

As a young Parzival, our speech and how our actions speak for us can result in misunderstanding and harm when we follow external rules. When Parzival leaves his mother, she advises him “whenever possible, to win a good woman’s ring by kissing and embracing her.”^[4] Parzival soon encounters Jeschute and faithfully following the “code” given to him by his mother, “he leaps onto the bed and, over the protests of the startled lady, forces his mouth to hers.”^[5] The consequences are profound – Orilius, Jeschute’s husband, assumes his wife has betrayed him, does not listen to her protests of innocence, and “punishes her...forcing her to ride behind him in rags, exposing her to shame...[whose grief] Parzival does not witness.”^[6] Parzival, following an external code of conduct, is yet incapable of the listening required for moral intuition (“the capacity to experience for himself the particular moral principle for each single situation”^[7]) and therefore to act with moral freedom (“an action determined purely and simply by its own ideal content.”^[8]) Nor does Orilius hear his wife’s protestations of innocence, and lastly, Parzival himself is no longer present to witness and correct the situation.

“All of us often go wrong; the man who never says a wrong thing is a perfect character, able to bridle his whole being. If we put bits into horses’ mouths to make them obey our will, we can direct their whole body. Or think of ships: large they may be, yet even when driven by strong gales they can be directed by a tiny rudder on whatever course the helmsman chooses. So with the tongue. It is a small member but it can make huge claims. What an immense stack of timber can be set ablaze by the tiniest spark! And the tongue is in effect a fire.”^[9]

How do we engage in conversation with the moral freedom that sets ablaze, not a destructive force, but the fire of love towards our activity of speaking and listening, and our love for “the other person’s soul”?

Parzival begins his journey of finding his right place “within the intuitively experience-able world continuum”^[10] by first following external codes of conduct, setting ablaze many misunderstandings with both his tongue and his actions, culminating in his failure to speak the question on his first encounter with the Grail King. “...[N]ature does not send man forth from her arms ready-made as a free spirit, but that she leads him up to a certain stage from which he continues to develop still as an unfree being until he comes to the point where he finds his own self.”^[11] It is this premature yet necessary encounter that instills in Parzival his vow to not rest until he can encounter the Grail King again. On this journey, he encounters experiences that

develop in him the capacity for speaking and acting from a place of moral intuition – “he finds his own self.”

What then, is “moral artistry?”

We are speaking from a place of our true self when we speak out of no impulse other than our own intuition—when we are guided by that intuition into the activity of speech. “To achieve true conversations one must, in short, build with the material of intuition.”^[12] Part of the path to this intuitive speaking is through our love for activity of that speech. What is love, “the modern word for what, in antiquity, was called ‘the good’”?^[13] “Love is patient; love is kind and envies no one. Love is never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude; never selfish, not quick to take offence. Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over other men’s sins, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance.”^[14] Love, in other words, is a verb^[15], not just a feeling, and as a verb, is this not the very embodiment of doing “the good?”

If the activity comes from our moral intuition, then we necessarily approach that activity with love. “To live in love towards our actions, and to let live in the understanding of the other person’s will, is the fundamental maxim of free men.”^[16] We experience ourselves as free beings when we engage in the activity of speaking as well as deep listening of the other person’s words, approached with love. “I may speak in tongues of men or of angels, but if I am without love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal. I may have the gift of prophecy, and know every hidden truth; I may have faith strong enough to move mountains; but if I have no love, I am nothing.”^[17]

The “moral artistry” of conversation occurs not just in the formal, scheduled times of conversation, but also and perhaps more importantly in the informal, spontaneous conversational opportunities. A preparedness for these spontaneous moments is however the same – “One must be willing to sacrifice previous thinking...in order to clear the scene for fresh illumination,”^[18] as well as maintaining an equanimity achieved through an imagination of love towards the other person. Our posture as we enter conversation, guided by meditation, enables us to listen with a willing love, openness, and discernment. And this discernment is then a gift received by the speaker. The listener, “...by cleansing himself of sympathy and antipathy in order to serve as an objective sounding board against which the words of the speaker ring true or false [brings the] speaker...to hear himself and weigh his own utterances. Correction – in the sense of an awakening – is there without others sitting in judgment on him.”^[19] The listener is crucial to this process of awakening in the speaker. Conversation is then set ablaze with a fire of creation rather than destruction.

How do words form conversation as a willing, creative force?

“In a word, there are three things that last forever – faith, hope and love, but the greatest of them all is love.”^[20] “In a word”, we find three things – the faith that the word is connected with the divine, the hope in its transformative abilities, and the love imbued in the word itself.

The world begins with the spoken word. God speaks “Let there be light.”^[21] This speaking is more quickening than the light itself –it is the word that creates the light! It is from this light that “God saw that the light was good.”^[22] The world begins with God entering into a conversation, quickening first the “light” and glorifying the world, the “gold”, with the conversation of creation that brings forth both form and life out of the void. “In the beginning...the earth was without form and void.”^[23] Conversation is like this – we begin without form, and out of the formless void of silence we create form and life. Do we not try to “see” if what we speak is good? As God created the world from the Word, so can we, through our speech, create something in which we also see the good.

“When all things began, the Word already was. The Word dwelt in God, and what God was, the Word was. The Word, then, was with God at the beginning, and through him all things came to be; no single thing was created without him. All that came to be was alive with his life, and that life was the light of men.”^[24] The Word, the Logos, was before the beginning. In its incarnation, “...the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove; and there came a voice from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved, in you I have willed the good.’ ”^[25] In conversation, we must not just see that the word is good; we must also will the good. But how can we will good if our activities are derived from a place of non-freedom, from a place of external rules? To will the good, to engage in activity with love, our speech must come from a place of free activity. This is the transformation that occurs when we move out of the sphere of external rules of conduct and engage in the task of developing our moral intuition. The words we choose to speak become a focused activity of discernment as we stay in relationship with the spiritual world through our intuition.

For where two or three have met together in my name, I am there among them.^[26]

The listener also has an active role in engaging in the activity of listening from his/her own freedom. Conversation occurs when the listener, choosing to freely listen, engages in the hearing of the other person’s soul, being conveyed in the speaker’s words, with the gesture of love towards the speaker. “Only when we have learned to listen selflessly and to be inwardly receptive, without any personal opinion or feeling stirring in us, can the higher beings ... speak to us. The beings of the spiritual world will remain silent as long as we still pit any personal feelings or opinions against what we hear from others.”^[27] This selfless listening from a place of equanimity requires engaging the will, not just during the conversation but as a meditative practice before entering into conversation, approaching and remaining in equanimity.

“Once we are practiced in listening in this way without criticism, then gradually...we begin to learn how to unite ourselves with the being of the other person and fully enter into it. We begin to hear through the words, into the other person’s soul. As we consistently practice this new habit, [speech] becomes the medium through which we can perceive soul and spirit...The soul becomes capable of hearing ‘words’ from the spiritual world...Perception of the ‘inner word’ awakens.”^[28] “There must be no room for rivalry and personal vanity among you, but you must humbly reckon others better than yourself. Look to each other’s interest and not merely to your own.”^[29]

In our practice of listening, in our willing to listen in equanimity, the Logos, the Word, incarnates in us and enables us to unite with the other person's soul through their speaking. Approached from a place of moral intuition, we enter into conversation in freedom and a love for the act of conversation. Hearing the ideas of the other person sets ablaze a fire within us – we become interested and engaged. “And there appeared to them tongues like flames of fire, dispersed among them and resting on each one. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them power of utterance.”[\[30\]](#)

The spiritual world speaks to us as we converse and as the conversation resonates within the speaker and listener. The listener resonates to the love in the words spoken by the speaker, as the speaker resonates with the love in the willingness on the part of the listener to hear. “If then our common life in Christ yields anything to stir the heart, any loving consolation, and sharing of the Spirit, any warmth of affection or compassion, fill up my cup of happiness by thinking and feeling alike, with the same love for one another, the same turn of mind, and a common care for unity.”[\[31\]](#) Conversation requires resonance between speaker and listener. Dialogue, from the Greek “dialogos”, is “sense broadened to ‘a conversation’”[\[32\]](#) – a sensing of the presence of the spiritual world and the resonance “across” speaker and listener.

The speaker and listener must be attuned. The Viola d'Amore is an instrument that has a second set of strings below, listening and resonating with the strings above, speaking, that the musician plucks or bows. And like the Viola d'Amore, conversation occurs when the soul of the listener resonates, through the spoken word, with the soul of the speaker. Speaking, the sound itself “communicates something that lies outside our own souls”[\[33\]](#) yet resonates, when we are attuned, in our souls. The catalyst for this resonance is the presence of the spiritual world. “Perhaps the first pre-requisite is to be aware that the spiritual world beyond the threshold wishes every bit as keenly to be known to us as we wish to know it. It does not have to be taken by assault; it comes gladly to meet us, much as a wise and loving teacher responds to the warmth of a student's interest. And no one genuinely eager to approach such a teacher with the proper reverence fails to elicit his responses. The spiritual world is no less eager to meet our interest. We recall Christ's assurance of this: ‘Seek, and ye shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.’”[\[34\]](#)

How do we bring the spiritual world into conversation?

“The Logos is not alive in contemporary languages, and has not been for a long time. These languages are word-languages, i.e., every word “means” something once and for all. They are not appropriate to express life or presence directly, but only indirectly as signals for wordless word. True thinking, improvisation (when one does not know in advance what one is going to think—a rare achievement), lives beyond word-languages. Once thinking and speaking were united, as they still are today for the child. Living thinking must penetrate solidified, dead language: this is the resurrection of language.”[\[35\]](#)

Fundamental to living thinking is a relationship with the spiritual world, enlivening our thinking with intuition. Fundamental to conversation is an instrument capable of resonance – the soul. We enable the knowledge of the spiritual world to enter into our thinking when we shift our relationship with knowledge so that, rather than knowledge being a tool for our thinking, we

see ourselves instead as a thinking tool for knowledge. When "...a thinker uses all himself as a tool of knowledge, where – in the manner of his thinking – he takes part as a creative spirit in the ongoing creative process of the cosmos", then can conversation "enter the sun-warm realm of living thoughts."[\[36\]](#)

"...[T]he creation of a Grail Cup consciousness require[s] an intact circle of fully active, responsible individuals whose only leader is the spiritual world."[\[37\]](#) Are we not so often vying for the center of the conversation? Lacking the sensation of resonance, is not the point and the periphery obscured and the conversation formless? What happens when, as an imagination, we place the spiritual world in the center, intuitively receiving thoughts as part of our conversational technique? "The moment a percept appears in my field of observation, thinking also becomes active through me. An element of my thought system, a definite intuition, a concept, connects itself with the percept."[\[38\]](#) Placing the spiritual world in the center, where we on the periphery listen and receive intuitive, living thoughts, enlivens our speech. We actively acknowledge that when two or more of us are gathered, the spiritual world is present, wishing to be known, wishing to be approached with reverence. If we hold this as an imagination in every conversation, whether it is a formal discussion or a spontaneous meeting of two people, does this not change the quality of our speech? When, rather than listening to ourselves, we instead listen to what the spiritual world wishes to say, this creates a shift in us – our speech and actions change.

On his second encounter with the Grail, Parzival...

"...[n]o longer in the thrall of what he has been told to do and say, ... 'reads' Anfortas's suffering, and his own spontaneous tears flow from his eyes. ...He does not awkwardly blurt out the question. Instead he asks where the Grail is kept and, facing in its direction, genuflects three times and prays for God's goodness to 'triumph in me.' The he asks the question: 'Uncle, what is it that troubles you?'

A subtle alchemy operates here. What Parzival says is not entirely his own, and yet it is. Certainly, Trevrizent told him the content of the question... Yet, finally, the question he asks is neither only what he has been '*taught*' to ask nor only what he '*wants*' to ask, but also what he '*must*' ask, in freely chosen service of the Grail... Parzival is filled with the speech of the Grail when he points himself in its direction... If the speaker is not first placed in service of the whole community, then it is not speech of Grail."[\[39\]](#)

This is the shift that occurs when we hold in our imagination the spiritual world, eager to speak to us.

Concluding Thoughts

"Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I vow to cultivate loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and to relieve others of suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I vow to learn to speak truthfully, with words that inspire self-confidence, joy, and hope."[\[40\]](#)

With a mindful turning of face to the spiritual world, receive the intuitions from the spiritual world, the flame of the Holy Spirit hovering within each of us as we engage in resurrected speech.

[1] Marjorie Spock, The Art of Goethean Conversation, <http://www.philosophyoffreedom.com/node/1987>

[2] Rudolf Steiner, How To Know Higher Worlds (Anthroposophic Press, 1994), pg 47

[3] Linda Sussman, The Speech of the Grail (Lindisfarne Books, 1995), pg 37

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Rudolf Steiner, Philosophy of Freedom (Rudolf Steiner Press, 1964), pg 133

[8] Ibid.

[9] James 3:1-5, The New English Bible (Oxford University Press Inc., 1976)

[10] Rudolf Steiner, Philosophy of Freedom (Rudolf Steiner Press, 1964), pg 136

[11] Ibid., pg 151

[12] Marjorie Spock, The Art of Goethean Conversation, <http://www.philosophyoffreedom.com/node/1987>

[13] Linda Sussman, The Speech of the Grail (Lindisfarne Books, 1995), pg 48

[14] I Corinthians 13:4-7, The New English Bible (Oxford University Press Inc., 1976)

[15] Stephen R. Covey, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (Free Press, 2004), pg 80

[16] Rudolf Steiner, Philosophy of Freedom (Rudolf Steiner Press, 1964), pg 139

[17] I Corinthians 13:1-3, The New English Bible (Oxford University Press Inc., 1976)

[18] Marjorie Spock, The Art of Goethean Conversation, <http://www.philosophyoffreedom.com/node/1987>

- [19] Ibid.
- [20] I Corinthians, 13:13, The New English Bible (Oxford University Press Inc., 1976)
- [21] Genesis 1:3, The New English Bible (Oxford University Press Inc., 1976)
- [22] Genesis 1:4, The New English Bible (Oxford University Press Inc., 1976)
- [23] Genesis 1:1, The New English Bible (Oxford University Press Inc., 1976)
- [24] John 1:1-5, The New English Bible (Oxford University Press Inc., 1976)
- [25] Luke 3:22, The New English Bible (Oxford University Press Inc., 1976)
- [26] Matthew, 18:20, The New English Bible (Oxford University Press Inc., 1976)
- [27] Rudolf Steiner, How To Know Higher Worlds (Anthroposophic Press, 1994), pg 48, footnote 2
- [28] Rudolf Steiner, How To Know Higher Worlds (Anthroposophic Press, 1994), pg 47
- [29] Philippians 2:3-4, The New English Bible (Oxford University Press Inc., 1976)
- [30] Acts, 2:1-4, The New English Bible (Oxford University Press Inc., 1976)
- [31] Philippians 2:1-2, The New English Bible (Oxford University Press Inc., 1976)
- [32] Online Etymology Dictionary, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=dialogue>
- [33] Rudolf Steiner, How To Know Higher Worlds (Anthroposophic Press, 1994), pg 45
- [34] Marjorie Spock, The Art of Goethean Conversation
- [35] Georg Kuhlewind, Becoming Aware of the Logos (Lindisfarne Press, 1985), pgs 21-22
- [36] Marjorie Spock, The Art of Goethean Conversation, <http://www.philosophyoffreedom.com/node/1987>
- [37] Ibid.
- [38] Rudolf Steiner, Philosophy of Freedom (Rudolf Steiner Press, 1964), pg 84
- [39] Linda Sussman, The Speech of the Grail (Lindisfarne Books, 1995), pgs 238-239
- [40] Thich Nhat Hanh, You Are Here (Shambhala Publications Inc, 2009), pgs 136-137