

Theses on the state of the new German soul

Challenges for a real reunification

Wolfgang Schmidt-Reinecke

More than 30 years ago, the international experiment of Auroville was established in South-India. Its objective is to build a new city with the participation of people from all nations, that can serve as a global model of living together, in an alternative urban organization. The integral community experiment was inspired and founded by the Indian philosopher Sri Aurobindo and his French companion Mira Alfassa.

The Auroville concept includes a town section in which various cultures and nations can establish their own pavilion. This is meant neither as an industrial showcase nor an imperialistic show of culture. The pavilions should rather express the *spiritual identities* of the respective nations. As the thesis goes, only the exposure and acceptance of these qualities can free the path towards a supranational consciousness. In Auroville and worldwide.

In 1992, a small group of friends of Auroville decided to establish a German pavilion in Auroville's international zone. As a result, the task of finding the "German identity" emerged.

The definition states that all German native speakers are part of this identity. Therefore and above all, it is a search in our own interest. This felt and feels awkward, since this identity appears to be repressed and turned into a taboo, both on an individual and a collective level. A well-beaten path from the mainstream culture of the Federal Republic is therefore not available here.

The search for the "German soul" became and becomes a tightrope walk between hollow new age eccentricities and Neo-Nazi Germanism. All this against the background of a distrustful lack of understanding among pragmatic-modern German contemporaries.

In the end, the participants probably pursued this unpopular search only because they sensed that we can only grow out of this deadlock through acceptance of our national identity and our collective spiritual tasks. *In order for the different countries to unite, they first need to be conscious of their own identity, to know where it begins and where it ends*, comments Vaclav Havel on this indispensable initial step towards a supranational union.¹

The following theses are based on ideas that arose from a part of the "pavilion group" during this cognitive, emotional and spiritual search for identity.

A few working definitions to begin with:

"Spirituality" is defined as a world view that considers a divine-spiritual principle as the foundation and unity of being and all things. The belief in, or the awareness of, a transpersonal fate of the human being, tangible as an inner experience and as a collective myth.

"Spiritual ideals" refers especially to the conscious participation in the development of the individual and collective human spirit.

The "soul" refers to the inner personality of the individual or a collective as a (initially undistinguishable) unity of personal factors and a divine-spiritual self.

1. Spiritual deformation

The Nazis have not only gassed the Jews in a dreadful way, but simultaneously poisoned the spiritual climate in Germany for generations. By mixing up the National Socialist ideology and spiritual ideals within a deep layer of the soul, the downfall of this ideology inevitably marked the repression of spiritual orientations in a majority of the German people. Germans have still not brought this tragic misjudgment and repression into their collective consciousness, i.e. its digestion has been blocked by a taboo which is still in force.²

¹ "Der Mechanismus der Rache", SPIEGEL 45/1999

² *What has happened to Germany is what happens to the seeker on the path of Yoga, this art of conscious self-discovery, when he follows a false light, one that leads him to spiritual ruin... No greater mistake committed by a man or a nation can be imagined.*

Sri Aurobindo Ghose, The Human Cycle

"The workings of prevision, future humanity, the new man, the deepest inner, invincible, highest confidence" Nazi terminology

There has never been in world history such a forgery of all values and truths in pictures and words as through National Socialism. Therefore, the former fascination will remain incomprehensible as long as one does not at first grasp the new consciousness and considers its aims. In fact, the boundaries of man should be expanded with it, not the territorial boundaries, but the boundaries of mind and consciousness. "Mastering the past" can only be realized if it is prepared in the new consciousness... National Socialism tried from the start to blur the sharp line between itself and the new consciousness, in order to misuse the extremely strong impulses of the new consciousness for its own purposes.

Dr. Edda Bars, "Der Aufgang des Abendlandes"

2. Modern loss of spirit

The view and knowledge of the world as essentially spiritual, used to be an ever present, substantial part of the German soul. Because of National Socialism's subtly executed abuse of spiritual ideals, contemporary Germans have collectively repressed this distinct spiritual reference to the German identity and culture, and turned it into a taboo. More so, and more fundamentally, than their similarly secular neighbors.

The witnesses of our spiritual-intellectual tradition are clear: from the German mystics, through the romanticists to the classicists and to the idealists of German philosophy; the composers, from Bach to Beethoven; the explorative thinkers from Steiner to Jung.

In fact it is precisely National Socialism, with its perverted mobilization of spiritual longings, that gives evidence of this characteristic trait. Hitler promised, in a way, to return their "own spirituality" to the Germans, to protect them from the prevailing, cold rationality of the modern age. Not just accidentally to the Germans, who were, and are, perhaps suffering more than their neighbors from the *soullessness* of the modern western age.

3. The reduced Germans after the war

For the self-image of the Germans living in today's world, the misjudgment of the occult (literally: concealed) aims and motives of the Third Reich and the repression of the German "irrational" soul after its collapse, has marked consequences: millions of contemporaries of the Third Reich sealed the misused (spiritual) ideals of their youth in an internal dungeon and remained shamefully quiet, fearful not to be understood by the next generation(s). As a counterbalance and alibi for the error of that time, the intellectually and culturally engaged section of this unfortunate German generation overemphasized a distinct rationalism after the war.³

The postwar generation grew up with this repression and silence of their parents. They learned that "to be German" is apparently something shameful, to be concealed and rather unpleasant. To a certain extent, their social identity as Germans has been shaped in an environment where the spiritual orientation and "irrational" parts of the rich German cultural tradition have been filtered out. What remains is a "modern" self image, albeit a rather one-sided rational one.

*The sensibility for transcendence, which characterizes even thinkers as critically opposed as Adorno and Heidegger, provokes distrust, even mockery, in Germany's spiritual life, at least if one takes the public debates as a reference point. Obviously, this is a worldwide phenomenon. Nevertheless, I perceive it as especially painful in Germany, where I, upon arrival, instinctively search for traces of the great German cultural legacy. Yet what I find instead is a rather politically and sociologically possessed, if not ideological, world view, which mercilessly labels any view that is incompatible in substance or in strategy as "old". This is the way today's Germany appears to foreigners who take interest in it.*⁴

Hans-Jürgen Syberberg laments passionately (in his book: Hitler, ein Film aus Deutschland, Reinbek 1978) on the "materialistic pseudo clearing up in postwar Germany,...."the forced

National Socialism was the distorted form of an otherwise in its substance justified German search for vision, which we must grasp first in order to reach the deepest layers of our consciousness.

Jochen Kirchoff, "Nietzsche, Hitler und die Deutschen"

Fascism was a failed attempt to build the kingdom of God on earth.

quoted from Carl-Friedrich von Weizsäcker in : "Wahrnehmung der Neuzeit"

While in the professional world, the interpretation of National Socialism has been generally accepted to be essentially a messianic movement, the more recent opinion of it having been a political religion,.. (in certain sections of the general public - the author) provokes vehement protests. Nevertheless, people cannot avoid to admit, that movements such as National Socialism did perhaps contain elements that cannot be explained with the usual interpretations.

Michael Ley and Julius Scoeps, "Der Nationalsozialismus als politische Religion"

³ *Only he, who uses reason self-confidently (and exclusively) as a measure against the various forms of irrationality, ranging from innocent to vicious, has a chance to protect the weak and the endangered... The freedom of Americans in matters of faith can not possibly apply to Germans: too fresh is the memory of what happens, when bare insanity turns into a method.*

From a leading article in a special supplement of "Die Zeit", on the subject of sects, 1997

"If Hitler has seduced the German people, he has seduced them into something that was in them. . But to look at and endure one's own guilt and responsibility for this enormous devotion to Hitler, is not an easy task. Therefore it is repressed. And each devotion to a guru, who shows himself in public, each basic act of (spiritual) commitment of those who have repressed, triggers memories of the brown past.

Bertold Ulsamer ("Verdrängte Schatten", Connection 9-10/97)

⁴ László Földényi in: Süddeutsche Zeitung of 1/14/98, "Was ist deutsch? Selbsthass als Balsam. Über den Verlust der Identität."

*German rationality" which can be observed ever since and can be understood only against the background of excessive Nazi irrationalism. As such, a demonization of the irrational has developed, with considerable effect. Irrationalism has virtually become... synonymous with all....that leads tofascism.*⁵

In conflict with their own cultural history, but in tragic consequence of the recent past, spiritual-intellectual orientations are regarded in today's new German discourse as a threat: The German left distrusts any "introspection". The secularized German churches battle with alleged sects in collaboration with government authorities. In German cultural affairs, spirituality is scorned. The local media regard old and new appearances of spirituality either as contemptuous fair game or as dangerous monstrosities.⁶

This is not to say that there are no outrageous New Age naiveties, and no absurd charlatans among the new gurus or that there are no fascist tendencies in many "occult" groups.

What is fatal however, is that we have robbed ourselves of all tools to separate the grain from the chaff...

As a rule, individuals in Germany's public life do not declare themselves publicly to be "spiritually inclined". Except perhaps a meaningless lip service to their Christian piety. Naturally, this does not imply that all these individuals do not have any spiritual interests. It remains, however, private. For sound pragmatic reasons: politicians and managers fear (probably rightly so) to be ridiculed and not taken seriously by their colleagues and rivals. The fear to be labeled as "esoterics" and placed in a New Age-/crackpot-/idealist corner or even in a spiritual Neo-Nazi context.

"Spiritual" greens, originally co-founders of the green party, were slandered for long, and thrown out of the ranks by the cadre Marxists and pragmatists. Other than their social concern, the SPD has, regrettably, no spiritual dimension. The same applies to the "scientific materialism" of the SED's earlier "Realsozialismus". The only thing the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) brings forward is the above mentioned lip service to a hollow world conservatism. The FDP shows itself to be rationality-oriented and is more concerned about market freedom than spiritual freedom.

Thus, an alarming spiritual insipidity reigns in German politics. It leads to a spiritual vacuum and to unoccupied spiritual (and political) positions. We certainly do not want to leave this, again, to the Neo-Nazis or to other powers that are perhaps behind them. Without doubt, they would again play havoc with our spiritual ideals and our German identity. And we would have learned nothing at all from our history.

4. Searching abroad

Since "not living your spirituality" is connected - either consciously or unconsciously - with a sense of shortcoming, the more sensitive ones among the postwar generation went on an inner and outer search for the "secret", withheld from them in both parts of Germany.

This also explains the disproportionate number of young Germans in Poona, in Auroville and in other spiritually appealing places all over the world. Also therefore, the noticeably high interest in esotericism and shamanism in Germany (significant also in view of the spiritual emptiness, that can be seen *all over the world* in the wake of prevailing nihilism).

5. The inner void

The unexplained cultural past and identity is also connected with a sense of vacuum: The widespread uneasiness of the postwar generation with their own "fragmented German identity". Members of the German culture with its distinct, spiritually oriented nature and alignment, seem to be in need therefore, of a renewed acquisition of spirituality, in order to perceive themselves as "whole" within the scope of their national identity. In order to not to feel homeless, and to be able to determine their own origin in the spiritual tradition in this central European part of the world.⁷

⁵ Jochen Kirchhoff: "Nietzsche, Hitler und die Deutschen"

⁶ *(It often escapes notice, that (in New Age,) in this broad religious current of self-idolization, the fascist ideology revives... It is esotericism itself, from the beginning and in its core, which covers itself in base interpretations of right-extremist thinking..*

Peter Kratz about New Age, quoted from "Psychologie heute", July 1997

⁷ *In spite of the deep roots of its spiritual past, the current spiritual life in Germany has no living bonds influencing the present. According to Simone Weil, the individual without roots is, above all, unhappy: either he occupies himself nonstop and makes himself important, or he caves in, becomes neurotic and resorts to desperate means.*

László Földényi in: Süddeutsche Zeitung of 1/14/98, "Was ist deutsch? Selbsthass als Balsam. Über den Verlust der Identität."

I consider it to be an enlightening necessity to ask about the positive aspects which were perhaps woven into the Nazi movement and were then increasingly perverted, because otherwise, we remain cut off from the roots from which a rescue could arise...

Rudolf Bahro, "Logik der Rettung", Stuttgart/Wien, 1987

6. Guest and host

Through the ever continuous, traumatic blockage of central positive parts of our soul, a well-balanced connection with our Germanness is not possible. Therefore the uncertainty, charged with a diffuse sense of guilt, this inability to look-at-it-straight, regarding the foreigner issue in Germany. A loss of the center as well in this area: swaying between left/green multi-culti (*let all come in*) and right-extreme/middle class xenophobia (*all foreigners out*). On the delicate subject of the relation between Germans, and foreign workers, asylum-seekers and immigrants, a definition of host (German) culture on the one hand, and hospitality-enjoying minority cultures on the other is helpful: *Between the host culture and the hospitality-enjoying culture, no relation of subordination or higher ranking exists, but rather a relation of the comprehensive and the included.. Above all, no value distinction exists... However, different rights and obligations exist.. (immigrants) can maintain their own characteristic culture, but as a guest on the pedestal of the general (German) language and culture.. The USA is a living example of this type of multi-cultural society and is (in this respect) the most developed.*⁸

Without this newly defined and re-acquired sovereignty, we are again in danger of leaving our unoccupied Germanness and Germany to the right-extremists and the latently discontented.

7. Green without soul

Not least in the wake of the Nazi use of blood and ground myths, we have lost our *spiritual relationship* with our earth and with nature. This relationship is nevertheless clearly and markedly recognizable as a vehicle of German thinking, in the tradition of legends, fairy tales and folk stories.

With their *rational side*, the Germans certainly perform very well in today's world in recognizing the threats to nature and the environment. German environmental technology is among the best in the world, and German political awareness about the environment drives initiatives around the world.

But unfortunately this environmental engagement rarely involves the heart and the soul. Only too often, it loses itself in political quarrel. Drawing from our spiritual power sources, the consciousness of our inner and inseparable union with the environment, with history and with nature, must lead us to a necessary ecological reorientation.

It is this attitude that makes "environmental awareness" whole and integral, and lends love, strength and endurance to it. And it protects it from cynicism, despair, bitterness and helpless hatred.

8. The all-or-nothing syndrome

Two souls live inside the German chest: German home and cosmopolitanism. Both are likewise "typically German". A people of fanatical German radicals and emigrants with wanderlust at the same time. The individual German often experiences this double character as a painful inner conflict. Unfortunately, many German philosophers - and in their wake the German citizens - fatally placed only *cosmopolitanism* one-sidedly in the foreground. In this way, they helped bringing a narrow-minded nationalism to unnoticed development.⁹

This well-meant, but fatal one-sidedness, repeats itself in alarming fashion. The young Germans in the former Federal Republic had (and still have) a "modern" self-image, free of a German identity, felt already as half-Europeans and consumed the multi-culti concept in keeping with the times. At the same time, in the GDR, "international solidarity" ruled; *socialism* ranked much higher than *Germanness*.

What you end up with is Hoyerswerda and Neonazis. And a continuous uneasiness in and about your own country.

The Nazis tried a brutal "total view" of the German soul split between *home and wanderlust* in which they wanted to make *the entire world* into a German homeland.

A better attempt at the *synthesis between home and cosmopolitanism* is probably demonstrated by Ernst Schumacher's motto "*Think globally, act locally*" (what about: "*Care globally, love locally*"?).

9. Where is the power?

Our attitude towards strength and power is split by our specific German past.

An extreme balancing act between pacifism and ruling power. Loss of sovereignty with regard to our own strength. Also here, the clinging to reason, to the appeal (which, to a certain degree, appears helpless) for purely rational solutions, the bare power of arguments.

Our own spiritual-"irrational" power sources on the other hand are split off in our new German culture. The dan-

⁸ Johannes Heinrichs: Gastfreundschaft der Kulturen

⁹ "It is the destiny of a German, therefore, to raise himself to be the representative of all cosmopolitans." Goethe

"To develop yourselves into a nation, *Germans*, your hope is in vain. Develop yourselves freely into human beings, that you can do."

Goethe: "Deutscher Nationalcharakter"

In this connection, see Johannes Heinrichs: "Gastfreundschaft der Kulturen"

ger: behind the pacifist threshold, fanatical violence lurks. Or differently: a purely *rational-idealistically* motivated longing for peace - without the deep spiritual power sources of non-violence - ultimately provokes the opposite. Weimar greets.

Today (just as a thousand years ago), the individual can only experience real power and strength in his spiritual power centers in body and soul. Like the Far Eastern martial arts developed it to perfection Why do so many of our people seek this cultural recourse and these detours in order to re-establish an integral relation with their own culture and their strength in general?

10. Making peace with the national identity

The meaning of national identity for the individual seems to decrease in view of the presently visible paradigm shift. This is comparable to some extent with the absolute conditioning and bonding through and with the family roots, which is weakening today. The trend is clearly towards a further self-determined individualization. A visionary look at the future however says that - while retaining a high quality of liberated individuality - a new and conscious interhuman connection on a spiritual foundation can be found (example: intentional communities).

On the horizon, the end of the significance of *national identity* can therefore be observed. A *happy end* to the story of national identity however, is only possible, when their carriers have first sufficiently understood and fulfilled the *collective soul* tasks connected with it. Otherwise *national identity* may reappear as a ghost of the past at an unexpected moment.

Just as the individual-familiar imprint of identity requires understanding, acceptance and possibly fulfillment, in order to be liberated from it.

11. Spiritual tasks

There is much to support the thesis that the synthesis of rationality and spirituality is part of the special soul tasks of Germans. This may well be one of the central tasks of humanity in our time, but the imprint and tradition of the Germans suits them particularly for the task.¹⁰ That is why they were especially predestined to be abused by the Nazi seducers: *rational mysticism* as a spiritual brew of *National Socialism*.

The Germans are regarded as cool planners and as yearning poets and philosophers at the same time. This - historically unfortunately mostly unlinked - concurrence ideally holds the potential to mediate between the partialities of Western rationality and the spirituality of the East. Because the total view of rationally determined reality and spiritually experienced reality - a *transrationality* in the view of Ken Wilber - permits, for example, the development of criteria that brings distinguishing clarity to the proliferation of subcultural spirituality (not only) in Germany.

The current design - marked with a paranoid fear of "sects" - of a legal set of rules for "mastering life" reveals, apart from open power claims, merely the desperate and undifferentiated attempt to defend against a "return of the (characteristic) irrational element" in German culture.

We must accept responsibility for the fatal error and fault upon the first temptation. We let ourselves be seduced and did not want to see. But what counts now is to tackle this earlier step once more. The timidity to do so is understandable. Perhaps it will not succeed until the next generation, or in the one thereafter. But it must be done. For our well being.¹¹

12. The collective therapy

Individual Germans (artists, writers and philosophers) have, mostly in recent times, begun to grasp and describe the persistent deformation of intellectual traditions and spiritual longings in Germany by the Nazis. But as yet, the devastating effect of this deformation on the German postwar generations is hardly in view. As its prevailing feature, a traditionless (and comfortless), self image narrowed by rationality makes itself noticeable.

Until today, this schism within Germans has not been removed. At least two dangers are discernable in the attempt of a collective-spiritual digestion of the recent German past. First of all, it would be disastrous if the subject would again fall into the hands of Nazis and Neo-Nazis. In a corresponding new falsification, it could suit vote catching among a considerable minority: among those, whose spiritual search has inevitably led them into a political homelessness. However, threats arise as well for the protagonists of an attempt for a public digestion.

¹⁰ *It is all about pointing out basic alternatives and value decisions for the German identity. In philosophy, it is characterized by the word pairs clarity and depth, rationality and intuition, intellectuality and spirituality. To bear this fertile tension, can be called "typically German" in this context.*

Johannes Heinrichs, "Gastfreundschaft der Kulturen"

¹¹ *The subjective stage of human development is that critical point, in which (humanity) strives to look deeper and recognize what is behind the external world and below the surface, tries to feel it and experience it therefore (individually) from inside... At the time (before WWII), Germany was the most remarkable example of a nation preparing itself for the subjective stage... (While) it searched for its soul, however - it found only its strength.*

Sri Aurobindo in "The Human Cycle" about Germany in the years 1920 / 1930.

The almost hysterical reaction to the publication of the book of Ulla Berkéwicz, impressively documented by Tilman Moser, shows to what extent personal defamation is still drawn by openly confronting a core taboo.¹²¹³¹⁴ Nevertheless, the necessity to master this collective-spiritual process, and re-confront separated parts of the soul, remains. The necessity to become liberated as German natives and as a cultural nation to meet the pressing global demands of the present and the future. Perhaps this the real "reunification"?

Examples of a beginning digestion

- Ulla Berkéwicz (lyric poet and author) novel: "Engel sind schwarz und weiss", Suhrkamp TB, 1992. *Expressive description of the spiritual transition of a young man in becoming a convinced National Socialist. Insights into the esoteric aspects of the SS-world.*
- In addition: Tilman Moser (psychoanalyst) documentation and pamphlet: "Literaturkritik als Hexenjagd", Piper TB 1994. *The outcry of the German cultural critics with regard to Ulla Berkéwicz's novel.*
- Dr. Edda Bars (author) essay: "Der Aufstieg des Abendlandes". Aurum publishing house, 1988 (out-of-print) *Among others Representation of the esoteric backgrounds of the Nazi era.*
- Jochen Kirchhoff (music historian and philosopher) essay: "Nietzsche, Hitler und die Deutschen. Die Perversion des Neuen Zeitalters". edition dionysos, Berlin, 1990. *Study about the seduction and inclination to seduction of the Germans in the Nazi era.*
- Prof. Dr. Johannes Heinrichs (chair for Agro-ecology at the Humboldt-University, Berlin) essay: "Gastfreundschaft der Kulturen. Multikulturelle Gesellschaft in Europa und deutsche Identität".. Publishing house Die blaue Eule, Essen, 1994. *Über ein neues Selbstbild der Deutschen.*
- Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker (physicist and philosopher), essay: "Wahrnehmung der Neuzeit", dtv, Munich 1983. *Here in particular the contribution "Ein Brief über den Nationalsozialismus" of 1952.*
- Michael Ley and Julius Scoeps, Hrsg. (Historian) documentation: "Der Nationalsozialismus als politische Religion". Philo publishing house, 1997. Collection with the outcome of a historian symposium in Vienna in the year 1995. *Assessment of the central role of religious-spiritual factors within the framework of a reception of National Socialism. Probably the first substantial academic approach of the subject.*
- Ulrich Wickert (newsreader) non-fiction book: "Deutschland auf Bewährung", Hoffmann and Campe, 1997. *Theses against the taboo on dealing with the national (German) identity.*
- Rüdiger Sünner (film director) cinema/TV-film: "Schwarze Sonne", 1997 movie theater distribution and TV WDR/Arte. *Mythological backgrounds of National Socialism.*

About the author:

Wolfgang Schmidt-Reinecke born 1949, studied journalism, history, ethnology. Lives and works as self-employed journalist, fund raiser and PR-consultant in the area of the third world, associations, agencies and non-profit organizations in Berlin. Executive manager of "Auroville International Germany e.V." Active for the press and coordination centre of the "Frankfurter Gespräche". Publication (among others): "Jahrbücher für sexuelle Zwischenstufen", selection of two volumes from a series published between 1900 and 1920 by Magnus Hirschfeld, Qumran publishing house, Frankfurt/M., 1984.

Contact: info@buero-wjs.de

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¹⁴ *The resistance against a deepened discussion on the subject of "emotional National Socialism" and its mythical and pseudo-religious aspects, is conducted (here - the author) through the means of literary criticism... A strange venom can be observed throughout many texts, as if the critics are compelled to take away a sickening maelstrom, which can be stemmed only by the most violent defense.*

Tilman Moser "Literaturkritik als Hexenjagd"