

The Backwards Review or “Ruchschau”

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By Dennis Klocek 3 min read

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“Only the hand that erases can write the true thing” - Meister Eckhart

In Rudolf Steiner’s work, the backwards review of the day in images is known in German as *Ruchschau*, loosely translated as looking at movement. We could call the exercise the Backwards Review.

The backwards review is a practical and potent alchemical force for entering into the spiritual world. It centers on taking symbolic pictures into the spiritual world and retrieving them again, which is the bases for the metaphor of distillation.

In alchemical distillation a physical substance is warmed to the degree that its essences are released. This is leading a substance back along its path into manifestation from essence to spirit. The released essences are gaseous but can be captured with glassware and condensed. Essential oils represent highly spiritualized substances in plants. Distillation allows the spiritual essences to be gathered for healing purposes.

The backward review is a practice of soul distillation.

This practice consists of reviewing the day backwards in pictures.

- Start with what was done after dinner. See it as an image of something that happened. Try to remember who was there, what was eaten, where was it. Avoid injecting feelings because the life body needs to be free of soul influences during the practice.
- Then move backwards to lunch by imagining pictures of who, what where.
- Then picture inwardly who, what, where for breakfast. Avoid judging content. Just try to form clear memory images.

If the backwards review is done regularly, dreams become more coherent and more present for the awake state. The dream phase that becomes more present in the awake state is the REM state, the Rapid Eye Movement state. In this state a person is paradoxically awake except for the moral memory functions of the frontal lobe. Sanctioning that area allows for the life body to create pictures of what the physical body is experiencing during the day without instant playback and judgment. This is dreaming.

The backwards review trains us to repeatedly form and dissolve pictures with personal will. When done at the threshold of sleep, this practice amounts to willing life pictures across the

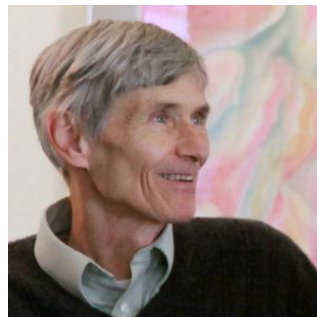
abyss of dream and on into the spiritual world. In the morning I can briefly establish a link to them by listening to my heartbeat.

“Forming and dissolving of images at will is the basis of karma research.” - Rudolf Steiner

A further practice in the morning is making beeswax symbols of whatever comes to mind as close to waking as possible. The little wax symbols form a running image narrative of the imaginative practice done in the evening. After a week look for any patterns the little waxes may present. This practice collects the corrective images that the spiritual world is returning across the dream abyss. With such an exercise the spiritual world can give corrected images back. This sharpens the inner picture making process and leads to what Rudolf Steiner calls living picture imagination.

As dreams become less random, they start being potent prompts for paying attention in the day to certain situations that arise that can have potential for self-transformation. This is a way that the warm heart force, what Rudolf Steiner calls, Gemüt, can be developed. In your body your heart produces the warm heart forces that can change cold, or fearful memories into enlivening potentials. In human trials the heart looks for potential. Each heart is looking for where the potential is in general life.

Paradoxically, it has to be trained to recognize its own particular life potential. Taking willed images of the experiences of the day backwards into sleep and then retrieving of them, can develop in a person, a sense of deep stability in the inner planes. This can then allow them to accept a lot more turbulence in the world without forming opinions. So, the result of this alchemical training in picture forming is that we become less inclined to form opinions, which is really great for community.



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