

## Point, Circle, and the Lord's Prayer

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The exercise given in the Curative Course by Rudolf Steiner based on the point and the circle emphasizes the process of transforming the two into each other: the point becomes a circle, and the circle becomes a point. The exchange between circle and point is accompanied by the sentences *In me is God* and *I am in God*. The two sentences together form a paradox, of which we contemplate the first side in the evening and the second in the morning. But the whole exercise thus becomes a rhythmic in and out-breathing, which reflects our relation to the world as a whole.

When we contemplate our breathing, we realize that it is an expression of our paradoxical relationship with the world. The air which is in me now was a moment ago in the world around me, and will in another moment return to the world around me. Inasmuch as I am a being of air, I am not separate from the world but in a constant exchange with the world. And so it is that also many kinds of therapy focus on harmonizing of the breathing process.

When our soul equilibrium is upset, a great help can be to take a moment to focus our thoughts onto the Lord's Prayer. Besides the fact that a prayer is perhaps a good idea at such a moment, we may notice how it calms us and puts the world into a better perspective. What may not be at once apparent is that a rhythmic transformation between point and circle permeates the whole prayer.

Let us follow the prayer and observe the process. The prayer begins with the words of address, *Our Father, who art in the heavens*. We begin by placing ourselves at a point on the earth, surrounded by the dome of the heavens. There follows the sentence *Hallowed be thy name*. Our picture of the father in the whole of the heavens is contracted to a word which we can express. We become the circle, with God's name at the center. Now we come to the sentence *Thy kingdom come*. Our contemplation must spread world-wide to include the circle of the kingdom. Then the circle focuses on a point as we speak the next words: *Thy will be done*.

What follows is a transformation in itself. The words *As above in the heavens, so also on the earth* remind us that we participate in two circles. So far we have looked upwards to the circle of the heavens; the rest of the prayer focuses us upon our relation to the circle of the earth.

The first sentence following this change of direction is: *Give us this day our daily bread*. Today we do not so often have the chance to experience rightly what we are asking for, because of the haste with which we go through life. But the archetypal experience of receiving our daily bread occurs when we are sitting around the table, with the bread in the middle. The next sentence, *And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us*, places each one of us in the center. From us our trespasses stream outward into the world; from us can also stream outward our forgiveness for the trespasses that stream towards us from others. With the words *And lead us not into temptation* we ask for help in maintaining our center. Temptation is that which would draw us away from our center to the periphery. But with the words *But deliver us from the evil* we express the opposite need. Evil is what we find in ourselves, and we must look to the circle around us for deliverance.

A prayer such as the Lord's prayer can work in many ways, with or without our awareness of the working. Often, once we start the prayer, the rest of it falls into a semiconscious repetition. But every time we pray the Lord's Prayer, one of the things that is happening is that we are bringing ourselves into a healthy, rhythmic relationship between center and periphery, between point and circle.