

Mercury in America



Reported by Ignacio Antonio Cisneros,
with Jordan Walker

On the surface a bus tour across North America might appear as an unlikely subject for anthroposophical conversation. In actuality, the opposite is true. I was a member of the *Mercury in America* tour. I will endeavor in this article to present my observations of this subject. I will do so with the request that the reader not forget a fundamental truth: each one of the members of the tour had their peculiar and individual experience. This is not so obvious as it reads. Perhaps this is the truest road we traveled while crossing the United States, its *cultural artifacts* and our own *soul expressions*: each one of us harbors a unique and evolving spirit.

Before joining the tour, I did not ask, “What good can come from a four week excursion across North America?” I am an adventurer in disposition and deed. I thought this question would be first on the lips of outside observers. Instead what was asked most often, accompanied by a momentary expression of awe or bewilderment was, “And how was it?” I am sure I echo the thoughts and feelings of all the Mercury Travelers when I say to you: Ordinary conversation has little room for the fullness of the experience and the demands placed on our hearts and minds throughout the tour.

At the journey's end we “installed” the bus behind the auditorium as a gesture towards the AGM.¹ Some of us sat by the fire we kindled and tried to find words to convey our experience. It was cosy by the fire pit; our stories belong there. Some attending the AGM answered our invitation to share. It is in this mood I will relay my thoughts.

The next level of confession usually sprang forth from us with something like: “There was great joy and sorrowful tears; peaks of comprehension and of solemn experiences as well as darkened feelings and narrow divisiveness.” It was, in a brief statement, *intense*. The kind of “intense” you say while looking at the other unwaveringly in the

eyes and allow the silence at the end of that word to extend. The days seemed impossibly dense with happenings. It feels in retrospect that we were on the road for months! I have to note, that this is the result of extended periods of time where life and companions demand from us to be continuously present, *very present*. The kind of “very present” that I can only convey with a very emphatic ‘V’ and a absolutely eurythmic ‘T’ at its end. Present for ourselves and for the others. It is fitting to remark that this is the kind of cognitive texture that results from experiencing natural disasters, fears, battles and child bearing. Yet these were not our context. It was a bus tour across North America. We had come together for an experiment in three-folding, consciousness study and artistic expression. We had come together willingly with a thin introduction by way of our interest in anthroposophy and travel and we had no idea what the actual dimensions of our daring would be.

Amongst the shifting of forest branches in the fire pit and the pouring of tea I find it becomes practical to mention that we shared close quarters, camp sites, meals and long hauls on the highway. Not always but often we found ourselves together and often that took the form of sharing circles or eurythmy exercises, or study groups.

This was not “a party” or “a vacation.” We found ourselves in parched desert dust storms, fertile farm fields, lush mountain forest and the ever present “anywhere USA.”

The environment was ever changing. That became the context for our experiences. There was no time to sleep into our surroundings.

Regardless of context our activity was always finding our self. Finding the other. Recognizing our shadow and our light, and learning to witness our shadow's dance with each other. There were many and deep conversations, much

honesty. There was all that as well as denial and the friction of impatience and the self pity of dissatisfaction. All this while



¹ The bus tour ended in Spring Valley/Chestnut Ridge, NY, where the annual general meeting of the Anthroposophical Society in America was held in the Threefold Auditorium.

getting by with only our bare necessities and clearest being.

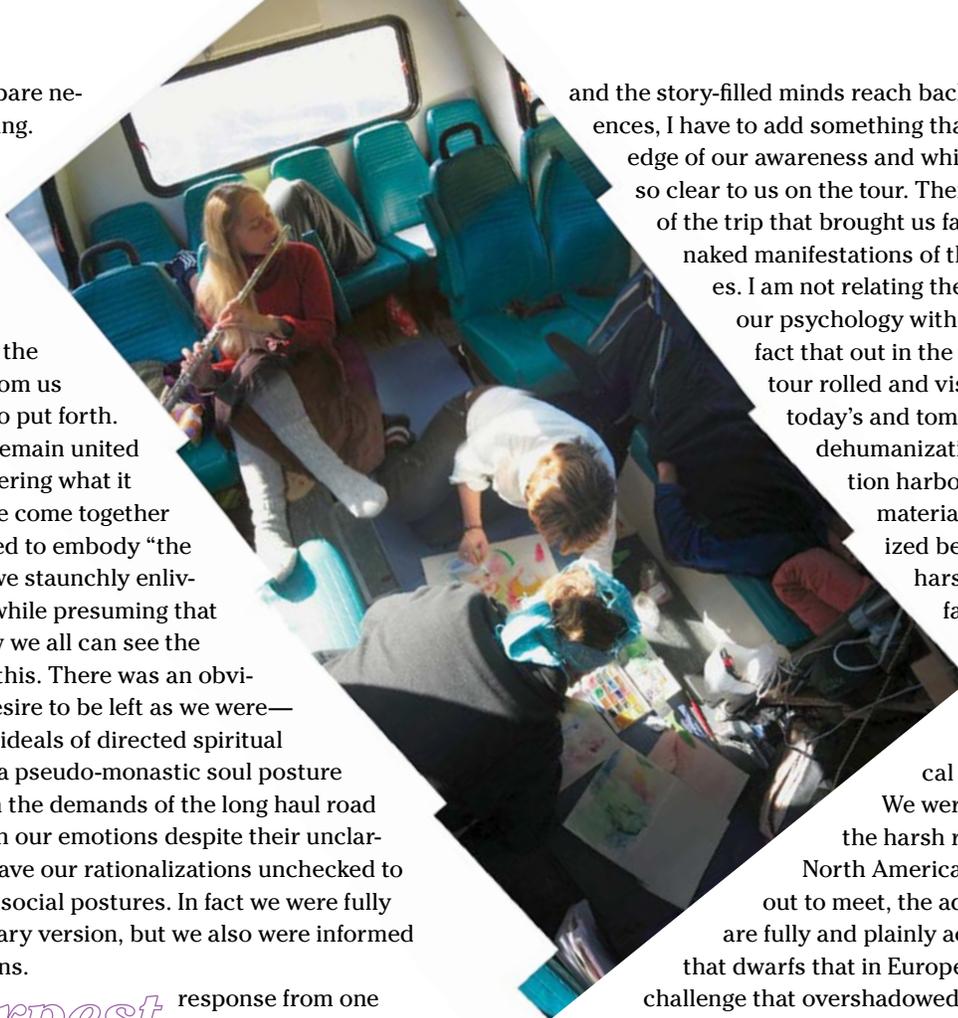
This is the point in the narrative of *how was it?* where the inevitable question came. "But why was it so difficult?" The short answer is that it was not so hard, but at the moment it did demand from us more than we expected to put forth. As a group we strove to remain united and committed to discovering what it meant for all of us to have come together there and then. We wanted to embody "the spirit of our group" and we staunchly enlivened our individual self while presuming that abstraction. Perhaps now we all can see the implicit contradiction in this. There was an obvious tension between a desire to be left as we were—which strove against the ideals of directed spiritual exercises. We aspired to a pseudo-monastic soul posture but were confronted with the demands of the long haul road trip. We preferred to be in our emotions despite their unclarity as long as we could leave our rationalizations unchecked to buttress our actions and social postures. In fact we were fully human in the contemporary version, but we also were informed by our spiritual aspirations.

The sharpest response from one of our friends by the



fire pit was, "Know thou thy self!" This was accompanied by the gleeful countenance which the untried can offer to a description such as I have offered. The reader might suspect that this is the reason why the Mercury in America bus tour is, in fact, an anthroposophical topic, as if a deep voice had announced this off stage with a consciousness mocking effect. I caution all not to avoid the unbearable parallel between what I have described as the trials on our tour and what goes on, or should ensue, in our general meetings with other individuals that seek the spiritual path. Do we meet one another when we encounter each other in the halls or in our conversation groups? How deep can that be? On the Mercury tour we plumbed the depth of this idea with as much compassion as we could bring to bear.

Later in the evening, while the fire is receiving another feeding



and the story-filled minds reach back into their experiences, I have to add something that is at the very edge of our awareness and which became ever so clear to us on the tour. There were portions of the trip that brought us face to face with the naked manifestations of the adversary forces. I am not relating the inner character of our psychology with this. I speak of the fact that out in the world, where the tour rolled and visited, there lives today's and tomorrow's level of dehumanization. Our civilization harbors and encourages materialized and animalized behavior at an ever harsher pace. We were faced, on the tour, with the question: "How can we carry out an anthroposophical life in the world?"

We were confronted with the harsh reality that here in North America, the realm we set out to meet, the adversarial forces are fully and plainly active, to a degree that dwarfs that in Europe. This became the challenge that overshadowed all our strivings. "Can we live and stand for spiritual science in the face of the shape and character of the North American culture and civilization?" As a representative of the Mercury in America tour, through this ink, I convey that question to you as our most pressing result.

This is the real experiment which the Mercury crew undertook. It is true that we lacked full awareness of this question at first. Yet we quickly found it loudly expressed through our interpersonal dynamics and group relations. We became a living study of this question, asked by North America to us, and of us to North America. We did so in the cities, in the wilderness, rolling down the highway at sixty-five mph. We asked this of our selves and of each other. We asked this as much as we asked our selves who am I and who is he or she. Do we have an answer? Many! As many answers as there were individuals on the tour. Can we remain steadfast despite the adversity? Maybe. With cooperation and wise planning. With love, peace, and understanding.

Above all, our main obstacle appears to have been how and when we dealt with the unconscious areas of our psyche. It is fitting that our tour rolled in to our community (Spring Valley) on the vespers of Michaelmas. In our language, if we are to embody the Michaelic being, I would have to say that it may take a "cha cha" or some other creative dance to constructively put our dragon to good service. This is among the lessons gleaned that the tour can most constructively share. In fact the youth





movement appears to be bursting with capacities to deal with this. I dare say the world responds wisely through the character of the youth. It would empower the Anthroposophical Society to notice this. The alternative enables our dragons, our shadow side, to obstruct and delay our shared course. Dealing with our shadows with brief conversations and polite dodging—that was never available for us on the tour. I dare say no one there was interested in that, although there were some bids to remain asleep.

This question

of confronting the world and its present future was not the only one we faced. We did embark with some very concise and pertinent questions which we asked ourselves. Following the study circle on the *Philosophy of Freedom* we asked what is freedom and what is the illusion of freedom. We asked what is consciousness of unconsciousness. We asked how we can perceive the “Word of the World.” We asked, what do our dreams bring as alchemical dew from the previous evenings retrospective. We asked, what does it mean to be I, and what does it mean to be you! We asked, how can we collaborate, be joyful, and not shun our inner growth. As well as asking of our selves not to lose our sense of direction, moral or physical, how and when to eat, sleep and travel. We asked why we were doing what we were doing uninterruptedly; perhaps it was a bit much?

In brief, seen from a distance the bus in which the expedition travelled appeared as a Kings County, Washington, Metro Bus. It was peopled by a heterogeneous crew composed of individuals from South Africa, Finland, Germany, Venezuela, Canada, USA. Our ages spanned from 21 to 49. The most unusual aspect of the effort was the shared interest held by these travelers in the work of Rudolf Steiner. It is not surprising that we made a family of it all, although for the most part we did not know one another before we gathered. I can write with confidence that crossing the continental US left a groove in our soul. It was partially successful, enormously rewarding and remains a clear format the details of which can be refined. The tour was not externally adventurous, American highways are very

traversable, especially if you carry your own BD greens. It was an adventure of the heart and an experiment in social dynamics and consciousness studies.



The Mercury in America Tour

was envisioned by Dawn Stratton (thesimplefool.org) and Lachlan Grey and Jordan Walker of the new forms project (newformsproject.org). The tour was loosely structured with each of the three taking on a sphere of the threefold social organ-

ism—the cultural, economic, and rights spheres respectively. Lauryn Morley, born in South Africa and living in British Columbia, was our documentarian and brought her fresh-from the Youth Initiative Program (YIP) energy to the group.

Morgan Sobel, an American living in Seattle, tirelessly ran the on-bus, fine dining, all-organic all-the-time, Chez Alchemy.

Ignacio Cisneros, born in Venezuela and living in Seattle, was our spiritual scientist in residence and continually offered opportunities for us to play witness to our own consciousness and the greater context around us.

Meaghan Witri, born and raised in Spring Valley, NY, brought the tour singing and an improvised moment where the back of the bus became a playground and the passengers four-year-olds.

James Steil from Alberta, Canada, headed the Philosophy of Freedom study group and offered insights for his research on the Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition.

Jan and Teija Englund from Finland were the tour's check and balance and worked with Monika Pudelka to create the amazing candlelit labyrinth in Central Park on Michaelmas.

Monika Pudelka from Germany and fresh from eurythmy training at the Goetheanum, led us in renegade eurythmy forms.

Cathy Samuel from Spring Valley, NY, took up the logistics of planning our menus and figuring out what twelve people's worth of food looked like. She also helped lead our eurythmy circles.

Eka Joti was our shaman-in-training, leading us in sunrise chi gong and awareness meditation.

Nathan Rouse joined us at Burning Man as a spirit observer and connection to the Native American lineage of the country we were to travel through.

