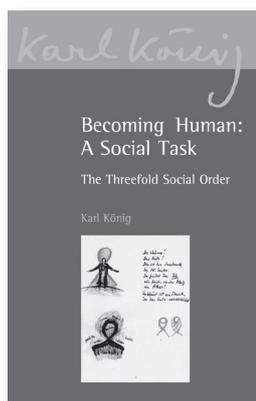


## Review



### ***Becoming Human: A Social Task***

**Karl König**

**Edited by Richard Steel,  
Translated by Carlotta Dyson**

**Karl König Archive Vol. 8**

**Floris Books, 2011**

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**Review by Anna Phillips,  
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The book opens with a quote by Karl König from 1938 in which he makes a kind of mission statement on why he sets out to do what he wants to do. Coming from a Europe about to be annihilated, he searches for a continuation of those impulses that should rightfully be in place in Europe at the time but have been unable to make themselves manifest. It makes a very personal connection to the theme that follows in the published lectures and sums them up beautifully.

The lectures on which this volume is based were given two years before König's death in 1966, yet they have a direct link to the preceding war years as well as to our present times, when peace is seen as an outcome of social change that embraces a new spiritual impulse which must include personal development. König's desire to work unflinchingly to replace good for evil links him directly to the Knights Templar movement. The area around Camphill Estate, Scotland, where König's community impulse first took root, turned out to be the Templars' furthest and last outpost.

After a history lesson in the different types of socio/political states as expressions of culture that have been in existence (culminating in Art Nouveau and the first Goetheanum), and the disastrous causes and effects of the first and second world wars on the regulating of states, König explains the history of threefolding and its connection to the Christ. Threefolding as a concept is not an invention of Steiner's but he described these phenomena within the human organism and so provided a key to unlock many hidden connections. To understand these basic principles would be the foundation for renewing social life. König explains how the social spheres are shared by the whole of humanity and also shows the retarding forces at work within groups and within ourselves to prevent peace based on a threefold social order.

This is covered in five lectures which are followed by three more. They cover the history and layout of Karlstejn Castle near Prague as an example of threefolding in practise. This building was designed and executed using esoteric Templar knowledge by King Charles IV in the fourteenth century. The lectures also examine the relationship between a new Michaelmas festival, buildings – like the first Goetheanum – as spaces for community endeavours and Michael's impulse which unites with community building efforts as indicated by Steiner in his last address to members. The foundations for a Michaelic spiritual science and the threefolding of social life were conceived at the same time, with the

building of the first Goetheanum at its centre. Thus we can understand how intimately threefolding is united with all of Steiner's work and why König took it up in his social, medical and therapeutic work.

The editor, Richard Steel, provides a biographical introduction outlining motifs which recur throughout König's life in relation to the theme. He has shaped the unrevised and unstructured texts to give us a clear ordering of thoughts. The lectures follow a natural progression from Steiner's impulse and the context of the world situation at the time to Karlstejn Castle and into the future (which is now) with the need for true Michaelmas festivals and its importance for a renewed social impulse. There are a couple of appendixes with texts from König's notebooks to conclude this eighth volume. The one on the threefold social order in bare bones format is especially helpful to give a quick but concise overview of what is actually meant by this term that may be a dead concept after its decades of use.

Threefolding in the social realm is not an easy concept to come to terms with, let alone to realise in the world of 1914 when Rudolf Steiner first mentioned it, nor in 1930s Britain when König came to Scotland and even less so now that we are living in a Europe spiralling into the worst financial, cultural and spiritual crises it has ever faced. All the more reason to pick up this very timely book and make an effort to understand how society could have organised itself; and what could still happen if social development stays connected with the true needs of humanity rather than be blinded by power and greed. At times it is heart-rending to read how the right path for humanity has time and again been sidetracked. Yet overall it is inspiring to know that this impulse has not simply failed and died out. König does say: 'There is almost no way out'; and that was in 1964. But the use of the word 'almost' gives hope. He believes that through true Michaelic festivals and social buildings, materialistic thought-life can be infused with corrective impulses to lead towards peace.

It is a book that throws a different light on our present day situation and as such it left me worried and questioning. Read it and see what you think.

*Anna is a freelance speech artist who looks after her family of three in Aberdeen and is currently studying part-time towards a degree in English literature.*

### **Knowledge**

Balancing a book on your head can improve your posture and help knowledge to enter it when it can't find any other way.

**Andrew Hoy,  
Copake, United States**