

# The Return of Christ in the Etheric

By Richard Cooper

Personally, for many years after I first read about it, I felt that the Christian esoteric path got a bit of a bad press after Rudolf Steiner said that it was a feeling path and that the Rosicrucian path was much better suited for modern life. Far from controversial to say 'times have changed'. Far more controversial to say specifically 'how' and 'why' they have changed. In our *technocratic* society, precisely because of modern sensitivities, we should keep checking how *relatable* our spiritual experience is because that is the key to so much that we will try to unfold here, the theme of karma and social aesthetics, which is inseparable from our whole impulse with *Anthroposophicum*.<sup>i</sup>

In addressing some of the aspects here of the Return of Christ in the Etheric, we shall take some pictures of the Book of Zechariah from the Old Testament. The Book of Zechariah known as the "*greatest of the lesser prophets*" speaks of the first and second coming of the Messiah, the first physical coming and the second coming, *apocalyptic times*.

*The Twelve Minor Prophets* are: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Zechariah is the eleventh. Zechariah's themes provide many images of a messianic figure that were borrowed by New Testament writers and applied to the figure of Jesus (e.g., Matthew 21:5 and 13:7, Mark 14:27, and Matthew 26:31).

## The Prophet Zechariah (KJV)

What we are seeking to address here our ability to follow and reflect on the comparisons we here draw so that these images can be followed and come to rest in our souls. We are recommended to do this with all these books, images and teachings from the Old Testament: Steiner says a *reawakening to their esoteric meanings*, as we awaken to how spiritual perception of these ancient pre-Golgotha texts, becomes newly possible through the *light of Christ*, enabling a looking back *into* history.

Why is Zechariah so specifically relevant to now? Firstly because of analogies: The First Temple was built under Solomon 957 BC; the Second Temple 538 BC under Darius the Great. What distinguishes Zechariah was the urgency of rebuilding in light of the end of the world. The nations round about are hostile. The leaders are playing with the occult. Zechariah, as priest and prophet ignored, the Temple is being misused for manipulation of the people; they are described as '*traffickers of the sheep*'.

Zechariah's eight night visions (1:7–6:8), depict the arrival of this eschatological / apocalyptic age and the attempt at re-organization of social life. Scholars thus refer to a "second" and "third" Zechariah: Deutero-Zechariah (chapters 9–11) and Trito-Zechariah (chapters 12–14). Among Zechariah's visions are four apocalyptic horsemen, the revival of Jerusalem after Babylonian exile, the rebuilding of the Temple and the world's recognition of Yahweh, Israel's God.

Looking back into history with these eyes of the Spirit, we rediscover Zechariah *first* in this sense, for he speaks most frequently and apocalyptically of Christ. But not only that, he also speaks of many other images that we know well from the Apocalypse: *Of Jerusalem, Babylon and False Prophets*. Hence the future of Christianity, the challenge of evil, of Good against Evil cities, and the personal psychological implications. Something we carry here in relation, is how Rudolf Steiner refers to our

time – *after* Christ's arrival in the etheric in the last century as the advent of *apocalyptic time*: humanity as a whole *crossing the threshold* into the spiritual world.<sup>ii</sup>

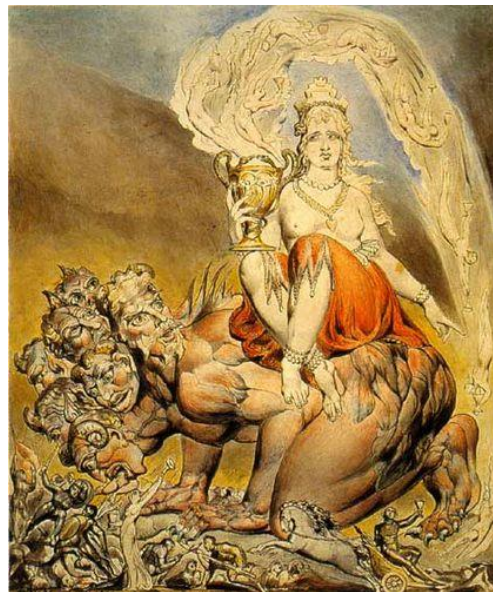
### First Vision of Zechariah, the vision of horses

With Christ's gesture of washing of the feet of the disciples, first, as Rudolf Steiner says, we bow to what is beneath us. We consider the human being as the crown of creation. The washing of feet is that gesture by which we identify ourselves with the will of the "other": that which man does and achieves in history. It is a gesture of care, of warmth, of compassion for what humanity is doing, and reflects Christ's own gesture, who gave his life to lead a reversal of the cosmos: from his Father down to us, to form us, as Rudolf Steiner said, into a tenth hierarchy. A hierarchy of freedom and love.

... 1:8: I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that *were* in the bottom; and behind him *were* there red horses, speckled, and white.

We can awaken from the illusion of the senses through this new anointing. We have a sensual world, a world of the ego, the world of plant life around us, and a world of mineral form. As we follow an inner awakening, colour itself becomes a living, tangible reality to our inner eye. How much richness in the appreciation of life, the breathing of a horse, the nose, the skin, the hypersensitivity? How much life in breathing in and out of the seasons, the garden that surrounds us, the natural colors of the seasons interacting with us? And there we stand, potentially as a 'new' human being, a new master of a spiritual inner world unfolding around us.

### Jerusalem, and flight from Babylon



William Blake, **The Whore of Babylon** (1809)

... 2:5 For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.

Zechariah speaks next to Babylon and Jerusalem. Now some may know the image of the Whore of Babylon, and can well follow when we compare the image of the *whore* with a decadent clairvoyance, of visions and images that we are all so constantly inundated with, from *ourselves* and *others*, in 20th century modern society.

Karma plays out in such a society. When we're dealing with come to the scourging of Christ, we're dealing with very personal experiences. Let's take the experience of the back. Sitting here, upright. As if we could breathe in that space. As if you have to go backwards, you have to taste, trust, feel as much, into the space behind. Now all of this experience, this experience that we call ethereal or *perceiving* or *hearing, listening*, is an awareness that I want to connect to the scourging of Christ. Why the fire, *by which God becomes known* to us?

Certain experiences result from this: First, a burning pain that opens the flesh to the blood. We think back on life, the struggles, the battles, the striving to stay upright. Now this fire is very intense, as karmic stripes and strokes of fate are imprinted on the back, so to speak. All those experiences that tie us to the post, while the back opens up through the wounds, the stripes of fate. Karmic strokes of fate, awakens a "call" – they awaken the *desire to know*: a much stronger inner spiritual life, – awakening new spiritual experience.

### **Change of garments**

.. 3:2 And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: *is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?*

We have two wonderful images here: the glowing brans plucked out of the fire, ready to shape – the malleable, plastic, artistic possibility. The rebuke here of Satan, enables us to turn, to turn from the influence of Satan and to take on new garments, to clothe ourselves anew. Indeed, this was one of the messages given to the Church of Laodicea, Revelation 3:17 ... *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*

... 6:12 ... And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name *is* The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD:

A further image we have here is the branch., given by Zechariah in reference to Christ. So, we have an invite here to follow, an inversion here, a call to change direction. As this new branch we grow *from* the spiritual world *out* into our world, the world of visible, communal social life, interactive and communal, as much as sensual, vibrant, new life, – for the etheric world around us.

### **Awakening to karmic interdependence**

Let us take two further experiences of the wounds of Christ: the wounds of the thorns around the head and the wounds of the nails driven into the hands and the feet on the cross.

Let's relate these first to Karma. As the spiritual world since Golgotha has inverted, it is the spiritual world in the sense of those that follow Michael, in service of Christ, who look with great interest on *us*, as it is *we* as in the sense of *friends*, friends and *co-workers* in relation to Christ who carry out this gradual new creation, with him. If we were to put into words the experience these elementals of nature have, it would be something of a feeling of neglect and sadness, as if they were to ask us '*are we doing our work correctly*' – as if they would look to us to guide their work farther into human society.

Now when we look at ourselves from outside, through their eyes, we may come to a wonderful inner experience. These beings look at us with great curiosity, precisely for the wounds, the wounds of Christ that we carry as we develop our understanding of the relationship between Christ, *World*, *Nature* and *Karma*.

13:6 ... And *one* shall say unto him, What *are* these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, *Those* with which I was wounded *in* the house of my friends.

Now, once again, this awakening to such etheric perception can be taken a step further. A great warmth develops that fills our whole soul. When we focus this etheric power inwardly, and bring to mind the experience of Christ on the cross, a number of experiences come to us. We experience all of the wounds. The Crown of Thorns, the searing fire of the open wounds on the back, The Crucifixion itself in terms of the nails through the palms and the feet.

We have to really be able to contemplate our own feeling participation in such an imagination. Firstly, the panic that sets in, the great instinctive panic against death, impending death and horror. We have to consider the long preparation of Christ leading up to this event, even the tears of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane: again, any reference to the blood, the blood of Christ is important, for the blood is the awakening of astral, spiritual vision, spiritual perception awakens as the intensity of focus of the I, activates the blood.

So, we contemplate the resignation of Christ; the gradual weakening of the body and the intensification of great feeling, arising out of betrayal, the experience of innocence in the face of condemnation, the experience of being almost naked and fully exposed to such a slow death as the crucifixion, in light of all the elements.

Christ is crucified as if on the central stage of time. All these experiences of the human being's relation to others: to friends, companions, to society, to those just performing official duties, and all those we had been close to as intimate friends. All these experiences intensify the feeling life.

With this experience the thinking life, the etheric experience of *air* that brings astral experience through experience to us, has become intensified to the penetrating points of the thorns. Creating a circumference of the head.

Our thinking life can thus expand to the widths of the cosmic sphere. The wounds on the back, opening up the surface of skin, open us up to the etheric experience as a whole, a feeling into the space behind us.

Now the slow death, the slow draining of blood, through the wounds is important. It is important that we contemplate this. The blood gradually trickles down the wood of the cross, and on into the earth.

## Mystical death and etheric renewal

5:3: Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth upon all the earth: for every one that stealeth shall be swept away from hence by virtue thereof, and every one that sweareth falsely shall be swept away from hence by virtue thereof..

What are the implications? Life therefore without this living experience of Christ, is thus no longer valid for the future development of the Earth, and as such becomes redundant, of the past, of no consequence, unless to provide karmic conditions to awaken to Christ.

Judith von Halle has described how the blood and sweat of the passion thus transform the etheric, as an important precedent for Christ's resurrection in a Phantom Body.<sup>iii</sup> We see here how karma has to be brought into line with Christ, for it is *with him* and *through us* that the earth is transformed.

The translation of the words "eli eli lama sabachtani" spoken by Jesus Christ at the height of the passion of crucifixion on Golgotha is significant, as emphasized by Rudolf Steiner and Judith von Halle here below:

"The words which the Lord uttered on the cross, at the moment of passing through the death of Jesus, and which were rendered as "eli eli lama sabachtani", which in English means: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", Rudolf Steiner rightly translated differently, not referring to the words of Jesus, whose body felt abandoned by his higher self, the Christ, at the moment of death, but drawing attention to the words of Christ at the moment of passage through material death: "My God, my God, how have you glorified me!- Here, at the moment of passage through earthly death, in the knowledge that through Christ's deed of sacrifice, spiritual consciousness would no longer be affected by this death, the "glorification" of the Son of God becomes definite, that is, of immediate benefit to all people, a Reality." <sup>iv</sup>

... 8:12 The vine shall give forth her fruit, and the land shall give forth her increase, and the heavens shall give forth her dew: and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things ...

When we follow this aspect of the spreading out, the spiritual connection to the wider etheric world becomes etheric. The spiritual power of inner work that builds the etheric power, pent up, that bursts through the body when the spear of the centurion pierces Christ's side. Judith von Halle describes how the lance in effect creates the impulse to awaken in the night, in sleep, in continuity of consciousness.

## From Entombment to Resurrection.

Inverted sensual experience brings our *Will* in line with our sense impressions. We start to participate increasingly *in nature*; Our *Feeling* becomes one with the Etheric World as a growing perception of Christ; – Our *thinking* can now become interactive with the *Inner Earth*, as we recognize new tasks, in relation (as detailed by Rudolf Steiner <sup>v</sup> and Judith von Halle <sup>vi</sup>). We thus, as described in Rudolf Steiner's First-Class lessons, experience this intensity of will, as *Courage for Knowledge*, an intensified feeling life as *Fire for Knowledge*, through the sensual world around us (Indeed, as Steiner describes in the First-Class lessons, we can come to see our *whole* lives as a '*flaming life script*'), to the point of *new intuitive Creation of Knowledge*. Essentially, we are looking here at the intensification of the astral body for the spiritual development. The utilization and transformation of feelings of *wrath* and *anger*, for example (well depicted in Tibetan Buddhism) <sup>vii</sup> reveal Lucifer in the outside world of the senses as a precondition for developing the spiritual

faculties for perception of Christ in the inner world,<sup>viii</sup> that etheric experience enables to take place.



- a. **Karma, and the judgment of idolatrous names and doctrines** ...13: 3: That it shall be so: if any man prophesy further, his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live, for thou speakest falsely in the name of the LORD: and so his father and his mother that begat him shall bruise him, if he prophesy....

In the future, it shall only be spiritual science that will be taken seriously after, with time, materialistic science will be exposed for all its fallacies. Not only this but there is a social component to this reality. It concerns spiritual qualification: ongoing form now, in an apocalyptic sense, when we speak falsely, whether we know it or not, – life, Christ himself becomes our judge. We shall be convicted in conscience. This means not only when one speaks of things, one *knows* nothing of, which is the problem of so much abstract pontificating, but as much when one fails to speak truth. In both cases, Christ steps in to regulate karma to bring us into line with the evolving spiritual world. Our mother and father in this sense of a new birth, a new creation, become increasingly Christ and Sophia.

- b. **Preparing the sixth era** ... 8: And it shall come to pass in all the land, saith the LORD, that two parts therein shall be cut off and perish, and the third part shall be left therein. 9: And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will purify it as silver is purified, and will try it as gold is tried. Then they will call on my name, and I will hear them. I will say, It is my people; and they will say, O LORD my God!

We have a wonderful description here of this process. Two thirds referred to above is of course 66 and one third is 33. When we multiply this by one hundred to get an astral perspective, over time we get the 666 and 333 we know form anthroposophy, to follow Christ's work through the course of

time. The silver and gold referred to here is the transition from the *Etheric Body* to the *Phantom body*: from an awakening of silver Moon perception. To gold Sun perception. Part of that understanding of the Phantom Body is the process by which its formation is inextricably linked to our understanding of brotherhood and sisterhood in the family of human beings as a whole: the community of life with Christ and the spiritual world: *between us* The Christian Community.

- c. **Living Water and karmic perception ...** 14: 6: In that day there will be no light, but cold and frost. 7: And there shall be a day known unto the LORD, neither day nor night: and about evening there shall be light. 8: In that day shall living waters flow out of Jerusalem, half to the sea toward the east, and half to the sea toward the west; and there shall be summer and winter....

What results is a new understanding of the times we are in now. The awakening to these more *widespread* perspectives of spiritual time and understanding of the future we are preparing for, as much as the past we are building on. What lies as a seed in the future creates the result in the past. We accustom ourselves to *seeing* life and karmic consequence anew, in the apocalyptic sense. In anthroposophical terms we see here the importance Rudolf Steiner placed on karma in the last years of his life, his statement regarding the '*Culmination*'<sup>ix</sup>, the renewal of anthroposophy from the end of the twentieth century, and the details about Cain and Abel in his Last Address.<sup>x</sup>

### Conclusions for the present

In light of these concerning times, of direct social challenges and their historical precedents, our society and each of us are so sorely faced with in 2021, what this brings us to, as perhaps a poignant note to finish on, is this quote from French psychologist and philosopher Jacques Lacan: "*Don't Give Up on Your Desire!*"<sup>xi</sup>

Desire for Lacan is not simply striving to obtain an object of satisfaction. To clarify, Lacan makes a distinction between *Need*, *Demand*, and *Desire*. Need is defined as instinct; Demand as: hierarchies of power ; whereas Desire in this sense however, appears as the *Freedom* from any 'other' *insistence upon me*. Desire for Lacan, generates a new conversation between 'One' and 'Others'. So, '*to give up on our desire*' would be in effect giving in to the demands of what others have said our purpose should be. As Lacan says: every refusal of 'Demand' from outside is less a problem, than 'closing off'. By refining, ennobling, and seeking out our 'true desire' we thereby resist the *Unjust*, not only in the world, but right down into our own psychology.

We see here some of the implications of Karma; Creativity; and co-creation with Christ. – Creating the New, is not *contradictory*, to be shut down and enforced by the state, but rather 'intensely' social, quickening and creative at the same time – socially adept! "Was ist erquicklicher als Licht?" – 'Das Gespräch,' – 'The Konversation'.

---

<sup>i</sup> Richard Cooper, **Founding Statement of Anthroposophicum**, from the Event 27 Sept, 2020. <https://www.anthroposophicum.com/articles-english/>

<sup>ii</sup> Richard Cooper, **Judith von Halle and Anthroposophy, Facebook Group**: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." Revelation 1:7, (KJV) . "When we understand our own position

---

now, in the twenty-first century, as standing within 'Apocalyptic Time': the time which Rudolf Steiner refers to as the 'The Return of Christ in the Etheric, we are at the same time also working towards perceiving the Phantom Body of Christ.'

<sup>iii</sup> Judith von Halle, **And Had He Not Arisen, The Christ-Stations on the Path to Spirit-Man**, Verlag am Goetheanum, 2006.

"There is a cosmic mystery about these stigmata that is very profound and complex. For this evening, it must suffice to say that these stigmata are the floodgates of the etheric forces that the Christ-Spirit sends out into the earth sphere. This, too, we find uniquely poignant depicted in the Resurrection painting by Mathias Grünewald." p.163. Rudolf Steiner has spoken extensively on the Phantom Body in the course of lectures, **From Jesus to Christ**, (Ten lectures given in Karlsruhe from 5th to 14th October, 1911).

<sup>iv</sup> Judith von Halle, **The John-Individuality From Contributions to the Understanding of the Christ Event** Band VII. Lecture Michaelmas 28 September 2013, Blumenweg, Dornach. Verlag für Anthroposophie. (p.26)

<sup>v</sup> Rudolf Steiner, **The Interior of the Earth: An Esoteric Study of the Subterranean Spheres**, Rudolf Steiner Press (2013).

<sup>vi</sup> Judith von Halle, **Descent into the Depths of the Earth on the Anthroposophic Path of Schooling: On the Anthroposophic Path of Schooling**, Temple Lodge Publishing, 2011.

<sup>vii</sup> **An extremely wrathful emanation of Padmasambhava is Dorje Drolö** (rdo rje gro lo). Dorje Drolö is one of the eight manifestations of the Lotus-born Guru and rides a tigress while defeating enemies. As Jamgon Kongtrul writes in the short spiritual biography - the Namthar - of the guru Padmasambhava, "The Lotus-born Master, the second Buddha appeared in this land of Tibet as a spiritual leader who guided an infinite number of disciples through the method of general instruction in the heart of the Buddha's teaching, the vajra path of the Secret Mantra, and especially through the method of the enlightened activity of the profound treasures. This great master was not an ordinary person who gradually passed through the spiritual path, nor was he an extraordinary bodhisattva who reached a stage of awakening. He was an embodiment of enlightenment manifested by the Buddha Boundless Light and the peerless (Buddha) Shakyamuni to lead to enlightenment in many ways those human beings and non-human beings *who would otherwise be averse* to a spiritual life. Also, it can be said that the account of a small part of his life story surpasses the powers of even a spiritually advanced person, ..." Dorje Drolö - Wrathful Vajra: "In 13 places called Tiger's Nest, such as in Nering Sengedzong in Mönkha, etc., he appeared in the form of uncontrollable wrath and bound all the spirits and demons of Tibet with oaths and entrusted the treasure teachings to them for protection. Since that time he has been known as the "wild wrathful vajra" (DORJE DROLÖ)."

**Dorje Drolö – Die Legende des wilden zornvollen Vajras, Enrico Kosmos, 2017**

<https://enricokosmos.com/2017/07/13/dorje-droloe-die-legende-des-wilden-zornvollen-vajras/>

<sup>viii</sup> ... **Looking through the carpet of the senses:** "What is it therefore that comes to pass in human evolution? Christ and Lucifer, the one as a cosmic god and the other as a god within the human soul, dwelt side by side in ancient times, one to be found in the upper regions and the other in the nether regions; then the evolution of the world progressed and for some time it was known that Dionysos or Lucifer, was far away from the earth; on the other hand the cosmic Christ was felt to be penetrating the earth to a greater and greater degree; Lucifer again became visible, and was once more able to be known. The paths taken by these two divine spiritual beings may be pictured more or less in the following way: they approached the earth from two different sides; Lucifer became invisible at the time when his path cut across that of the Christ — his light was overpowered by the Christ light. The Christ entered the human soul, became the planetary spirit of the earth, growing more and more to be the mystical Christ within human souls, and can be felt and realised through inner experiences. In this way the soul becomes gradually more capable of again beholding the other being, who took the reverse way, from within to



---

without. Lucifer, from a being within man's inner nature, a purely earthly being such as he was when he was sought in the mysteries leading to the underworld, becomes a cosmic god. He will appear in ever-greater radiance in the outer world which we behold when we look through the tapestry of the sense world. Man's vision will become reversed. In the past Lucifer was seen behind the veil of the inner soul world, and the Christ, as by Zarathustra, behind the veil of the sense-world, but in the future the Christ will to an ever greater degree be realised by inner spiritual meditation and Lucifer will be found when the gaze is directed outwards into cosmic regions. Thus we have to record a complete reversal of the conditions by which man can acquire knowledge in the course of human evolution. The Christ, an erstwhile cosmic god, has become an earthly god, who is henceforth the soul of the earth; Lucifer, an erstwhile earthly god, has become a cosmic god. And when in the future, man desires again to ascend to the external spiritual world hidden behind the veil of the sense-world, and is not willing to stop short at the external and material, he must penetrate through the sense-world into the spiritual world and must allow himself to be borne to the light by the 'Light Bringer.' No faculties for penetration into that region can arise in man if he does not create them out of the forces flowing to him from Lucifer's kingdom. Men would be drowned in the sea of materialism, would persist in the belief that there is nothing except the outer world of matter, if they did not ascend to inspiration through the Luciferic principle. Just as the Christ principle exists to strengthen our inner being, so the Luciferic principle intensifies and develops those faculties by means of which we have to penetrate into the spiritual worlds fully and completely. Lucifer will intensify our understanding and comprehension of the world; the Christ will strengthen us perpetually within."

Rudolf Steiner GA 113. **The Orient in the Light of the Occident. The Children of Lucifer and the Brothers of Christ.** 6th lecture.

ix Stephen E. Usher, **Remarks On The Culmination at the End of the 20th Century**, page 71 — #7 JUPITER, Vol. 6 (2011), ISSN 1661-8750, Verlag am Goetheanum, Dornach/Switzerland.

<https://silo.tips/download/remarks-on-the-culmination-at-the-end-of-the-20th-century>

\* Richard Cooper, **Social Organics, Building on Rudolf Steiner and Herbert Witzenmann**, 2021,

<https://www.anthroposophicum.com/articles-english/>

xi Jacques Lacan, **The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis (Book XI)** Paperback – Illustrated, April 17, 1998. There are two relatively straightforward ways in which we can understand one of Lacan's most well-known maxims, that "Man's desire is the desire of the Other"? ([Seminar XI](#), p.235). Firstly, that desire is essentially a desire for recognition from this 'Other'; secondly that desire is for the thing that we suppose the Other desires, which is to say, the thing that the Other lacks. <https://www.lacanonline.com/2010/05/what-does-lacan-say-about-desire/>