

# The Crossing Place of the Heart.

The crossing strings featured in the latest Sounding Bowls are a powerful image. The idea came to me while seeking something new for a travelling exhibition in Germany whose curators had asked me to put together something bigger and better than ever before. Soon after I drew up the first geometric sketch I began to realise that there was something here that touched something deep in me. Once it was made and people began to share their feelings with me on seeing and playing it I realised that it was not in me alone that the heart was moved by the picture of strings crossing in that pattern. I would like to share with you some of what rises up for me around this and connected with some physiology of the subtle body and soul that I was studying some years back :



Our blood carries our sense of self, (that everyday self that arises as response to our spirit or eternal self working into matter through the personal body.) In the warmth, the redness, the iron of the blood the determination to be here now as manifest being, is alive. At it's simplest this is experienced as Love. Love for life, love for the world, love for others. A desire to experience, that leads us out, into life, into 'the world'. This Love, determination, desire, moves out from the heart and into the muscles where it encounters the heaviness of life, the contest that continuing to be alive involves. There it gives it's life and strength into the muscles, like passing on encouragement, it gives up some of it's warmth and some of it's oxygen and takes up the 'waste product' of effort, the carbon dioxide, like a friend gives us encouragement by sharing our troubles and fears. Taking on a bit of our fear and suffering.

On a physical level in the muscles the redness of the blood changes to a blueness as the Oxygen is converted to Carbon Dioxide by the work done in the muscles. One can look at blue blood in an imaginative sense as older and wiser than red blood. Feeling a little blue it no longer has the enthusiasm for engagement and returns to the heart. The heart responds, sending out new red blood to the body, in flows the blue blood, out flows the red.

Looking at the process that happens in the muscles one can see that common everyday concepts can understand this process. Like youthful enthusiasm the red blood is full of energy. Engaging the world in the muscles is like life experience and, though less energetic the blue blood has gained in experience and takes it's new found wisdom to heart. In this view the heart is miraculous: it receives tired, experienced blue blood and gives out energetic red blood. Blue, sorrow, experience, tiredness in; Red, joy, love, enthusiasm, generosity out. Is this not so much like us? sometimes full of the desire to give, other times wishing only to retreat and rest? Yet the heart does this about 80 times a minute, takes in the old, gives out the new. Pulse by pulse. How does it do this?

Notice that in one place this 'red out, blue in' is reversed: all the arteries going out from the heart carry red blood except one. All the veins coming to the heart carry blue blood, except one. The 'pulmonary artery' and 'pulmonary vein', going to and from the lung reverse this pattern. To the lungs the heart sends out it's blue blood. The blood there receives new oxygen from the breath and, no longer feeling blue it returns to the heart as red blood to be warmed and is sent out to the rest of the body again.

Breathing is our link to the all-spirit that flows around the earth in the air. Connecting to the spirit in our breathing, our blood gives up it's tiredness and returns to the heart refreshed.

This small circuit of blood vessels connects only through the heart to the main circuitry of vessels that feed the rest of the body. In the heart the crossing point between the red-out-blue-in process and the refreshment process is found. --- In our inner life this is reflected by the relationship between our work in the world and our spiritual life. For some spiritual life simply means recreation of any kind. For others it is in meditation and prayer, in the Christian Way the archetype is in sharing the bread and the wine. At the

alter the communion service contains confession and communion. Like the blue blood going from heart to lung confession allows our worldly tiredness, sorrow and 'failure' to pass from us to Christ. In communion the image is like that of the red blood, re-energised through contact with a greater being (the air of the world is seen in some religions as spirit) returning to the heart to be offered again in daily life/work as energy and enthusiasm to 'the world'.

So the heart stands between the effort we make in the world, the effort we make to be in the world and our link with the spirit. The heart 'tastes' or 'hears' the result of our effort and passes this on, or offers this up to the spirit. The heart stands between our dissolving into the spirit and our hardening into every day work, pulsing and balancing these directions.

Thus in the heart there is a crossing point of the body's activity, outgoing work/courage and inflowing contemplation/prayer. Our relationship with the world and our relationship with the spirit cross over in the heart. From the world (via the muscles and the senses) we receive stuff that we need to transform as shown/carried in the blue blood flowing to the heart.

In this crossed fan pattern of stringing this image is reflected. In the new 'Heart-Lyre' design pattern (? Name not decided yet, *image to follow*) the two lobes of the base reflect the two sides of the heart and the lower, shorter area of uncrossed strings and the upper, larger area of uncrossed strings are like the smaller and larger chambers of the heart. Four chambers, four areas of uncrossed string, two large, two small like the two circuits of vessels. Between this, the essence of human experience, the problem of bridging our desires is expressed in the crossing pattern.

In the heart, and in life this bridging is constantly mediated by the fact that we can offer our sorrows, our blue blood up to the spirit to be transformed, the archetype of this acceptance of sorrow, the archetype of transformation is Christ, the God who came to earth to suffer the trials of being human. He continues to take our sorrows and give love and understanding in return for what he is offered now as he did in those 3 years. He does this whether we understand his name or not, he does this so long as we offer up in the spirit that he offered his life in, 2000 yrs ago. In a parallel fashion the heart sends the blue blood to the lungs. A new image arises when the heart receives red blood back from the lungs, the

image of our receiving our identity from the spirit. In the movement of blood from the heart, red out blue in, to the rest of the body we have an image of testing our identity against experience and taking on aspects of the world for transformation as we do so.

If we do not do this in a healthy and generous fashion two particular patterns of wrong can develop. On the one hand the warmth and goodness of the red blood does not flow outwards to the muscles but is drawn back. When what we are given through the spirit is not offered to the world but is kept for personal enjoyment, then narcissism arises. A lack of generosity, a weakness in our ability to give. The other pattern of wrong arises when the experience and sorrows of the world inherent in the blue blood are not willingly received by the heart. When we try to resist taking on what the world needs us to take on we become abusive, our attempts to throw off those 'birds that come home to roost' makes us violent in word or deed. The healthy pattern is that we give with the red blood and receive in the blue. Through the breathing and through the pulse of the heart this becomes possible as the human being finds his or her place as co creator with God of all that we live in.

Thus is Christ crucified not only on the wooden cross of the Romans but in every moment of our waking lives he suffers the problems of our conflicting desires, his gift of acceptance of suffering mediates our ability to accept the suffering that everyday life entails. Christ is in our hearts, working for us, every moment of every day. Our acceptance of his gift enables us to move away from narcissism and aggression towards a more fruitful role in the world. Our acceptance of his gift when we offer ourselves through confession, inwardly or through another human being, towards the Christ spirit enables our offering to the world to be refreshed. We gain through prayer, meditation, confession, communion, what the heart gains from the lungs. That way we can offer again from our hearts to a hungry world, to our hungry selves. That way we become servants of the True Christ as he lives and works in our hearts.

[www.SoundingBowls.com](http://www.SoundingBowls.com)

[Tobias@SoundingBowls.com](mailto:Tobias@SoundingBowls.com)