

Art and Medicine Education

Coordinator: Carlos Guido Musso

Doctor of Medicine. University of Salamanca, Spain.

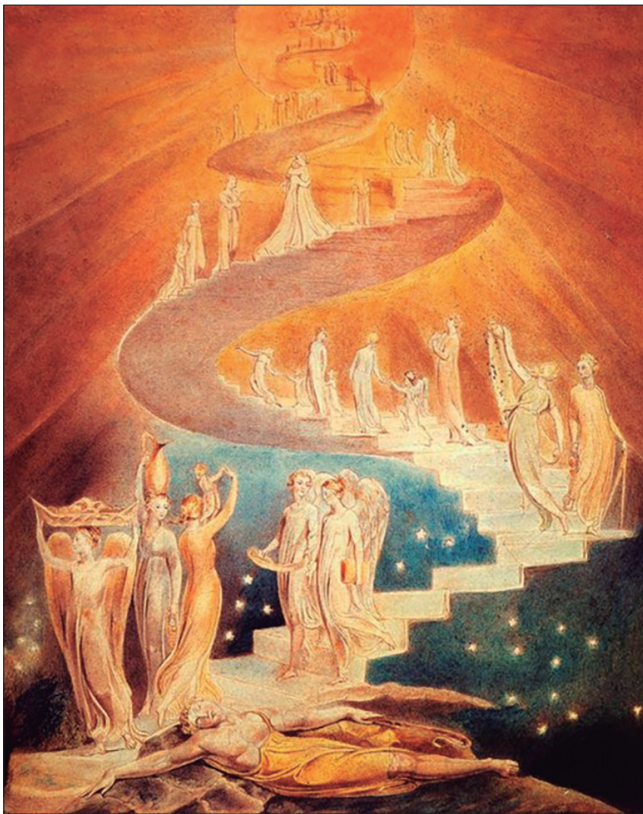
Professor of Medical Humanities. Instituto Universitario del Hospital Italiano de Buenos Aires.



Carlos Guido Musso

Introduction

Art with its language of images (symbolic) transmits ideas directly, disregarding the word, and thus avoiding the conceptual reduction inherent in its verbalization. For this reason, art constitutes a powerful educational instrument, ideal for transmitting the transcendental aspects of the human. In this space we will present successively a series of articles in which through the art we will analyze the concept of the personal evolution.



The art and the personal development: the Jacob's ladder by William Blake

In this opportunity we will analyze the beautiful painting "The ladder of Jacob" by the poet and romantic

painter William Blake (1757-1827), and through which we will analyze the concept of the personal evolution.

The 21st century will be spiritual or it will not be.

(André Malraux 1901-1976)

Description of the work

At the base of the painting lies Jacob sleeping and at the height of his head, as if it came from his dreams, the first steps of an ethereal staircase are observed, and from the Earth spirally rises towards a shining Sun. Through this ladder various individuals descend and ascend, the ones on the lower part of the staircase are clinging to their material possessions (as the golden plate, or the documents), while the ones who are on the higher part are clinging to their spiritual possessions (such as interpersonal relationships). Finally, a starry sky marks the transition between the mud of the world on which Jacob sleeps and the golden vault which shelters him.

Analysis of the work

Both the biblical story, and the painting by William Blake which represents it, tell us about the fact that the human being lies prostrate and asleep (Jacob), muddled in the sterile worldly conflicts that lead him to live a mechanical life (and even a death), a situation that not only stagnates it, but even many times makes him go backwards (descend) in the evolutionary scale of being. If only he woke up and could see the phenomenal access stairway that connects the worldly plane of the consciousness, where each one considers themselves as a separate entity of the rest (world of fragmentation) with the highest planes of the consciousness, where each one knows that they are one with the rest (world of oneness).

However, such spiritual growth (ascent) requires the difficult task of getting rid of two great mental burdens: the attachment and the ego. In attachment, what you have is confused with what you are, matter is taken as an end and not as the means that it really is, and in the ego

you are no longer aware (mental blindness) that you are only an auto conscious fragment of an eternal unconscious totality, melting pot where everything fuses, even the opposites.

The sinuousness of the staircase symbolizes that the path of personal growth is made up of the moments of progress and setbacks (ascending and descending steps), and even moments when opposite positions are adopted (as it occurs in spiral staircases), since learning only truly happens by contrast. In addition, helical growth allows it to be slow and progressive, avoiding damage due to excess of "light", since you must have a certain maturity to be able to assimilate some truths without being hurt.

The glow of the higher level represents the overcoming of suffering, symbolized by the darkness of the lower level sector. Suffering belongs to the lower level because this is the one in which neither attachment or ego have been overcome, since suffering is transcended by understanding that you have nothing and nothing are.

There would be pain but not suffering, because pain is what is felt when something is wrong, but suffering results from how you handle that specific feeling. Beyond of this perspective (world of uniqueness), there is always peace, regardless of the vicissitudes of life (world of frag-

mentation), since good things are enjoyed and the bad comes as a lesson for the future, so that everything (the good and the bad) helps.

The human being is a seed asleep in the depth of the ground, that when germinating (awakens) has the opportunity to transform into a leafy tree (ladder) which full of energy aspires to reach the sun (self-awareness).

We conclude that "the Jacob 's Ladder" by William Blake provides an opportunity to reflect on the path towards personal growth.

References

1. Musso CG, Enz P. Art as an educational tool in medicine. Arch Argent Pediatr 2014; 112 (6): 494-495.
2. Purce J. The mystic spiral. Journey of the soul. London; Thames & Hudson 2017.
3. Orff C. Carmina Burana. 1936 (cantata).
4. Gauding M. La biblia de los signos y de los símbolos. Madrid; Gaia 2009.
5. Nietzsche F. Así hablaba Zaratustra. Barcelona; Teorema 1985.
6. Cavallé M. La sabiduría de la no-dualidad. Barcelona; Kairós 2000.
7. Saban M. La cábala. La psicología del misticismo judío. Barcelona; Kairós 2016.