

# New Findings on Daniel Nicol Dunlop (1868–1935) by Thomas Meyer

**‘The Soul finds its greatest joy in making Sacrifice’**

D.N. Dunlop, *The Science of Immortality*, London 1918, p.122

## **D.N. Dunlop, a pioneer of world economy and spiritual community building**

D.N. Dunlop was a pioneer of modern community building—in two areas in particular: industry and economics and the sphere of the free spiritual life. In 1924 he founded the World Power Conference, opened by the Prince of Wales in London that year. This was the first international conference to invite engineers and industrialists from all over the world (including Germany and Russia, two former World War adversaries), with the purpose of establishing a basis for co-operation and co-ordination in the production and technological use of energy resources within a modern world economy. In 1929 a worldwide assessment of raw materials and energy resources was published in book-form with the title *Power Resources of the World*. The WPC gave birth to a permanent institution—the *World Energy Council*—that has its headquarters in London and has since held regular congresses in different capital cities throughout the world. The website of this private international organisation records a short history of the institution which focuses on the profiles of five leading figures, beginning with Dunlop: ‘Shortly after World War I, Scotsman Daniel Dunlop, a visionary working in the British electricity industry, decided to bring together leading energy experts for a World Power Conference to discuss current and emerging energy issues. In 1923, he began working with countries around the globe to establish national committees that would stimulate attendance and prepare for technical participation at such a conference. The First World Power Conference was held the next year, 1924, in London and attracted 1,700 delegates from 40 countries. The meeting was so successful that those attending decided to establish a permanent organisation to continue the dialogue begun at the conference.’<sup>1</sup>

Within the spiritual-cultural sphere, Dunlop was a pioneer of the ‘summer school’—an idea which he actively pursued and brought to practical realisation during his theosophical phase. Dunlop maintained that the ‘summer school’ was not in conflict with pure individual striving, but could potentise it—indeed, offer it fulfilment. For true individualism, if developed far enough, is exactly what socially conscious communities need if they are to progress. To a large extent these summer schools were gatherings of ‘communities of free spirits’. Following his encounter with Rudolf Steiner in 1922, Dunlop organised the great summer schools of Penmaenmawr and Torquay. According to Rudolf Steiner, these were ‘recorded in the Golden Book of the Anthroposophical Movement’.<sup>2</sup>

Steiner himself characterised Dunlop as a ‘far-seeing’ anthroposophist with visionary goals, endowed with ‘clear and delicate perception’ and remarkable human sensitivity and tact.

The way in which Dunlop’s visionary capacities manifested is clearly seen in the two examples already described. His sensitivity in human relationships, on the other hand, came to the fore on numerous occasions. One such occasion was in December 1923 when Dunlop—despite Steiner’s very high public regard for him—chose to remain in the background of events by not attending the Christmas Conference in Dornach at the same time as Harry Collison, who had just been elected as General Secretary of the newly established Anthroposophical Society of Great Britain. Further examples may be found in his first meeting with Rudolf Steiner, in his conversations with the latter in Torquay

about his [R.S.'s] illness, and regarding his relationship to Eleanor C. Merry—to name but a few.

According to Steiner's indications, Dunlop was 'connected to all the ancient mysteries' and had also worked within a secret society among the Templars. Dunlop's most deeply rooted intention was to serve the supra-personal goals of humanity, thereby sacrificing all personal and trivial motives and deeds. If Rudolf Steiner described him as a 'brother' at their final farewell in London, it may be possible to link this remark to the shared, and yet thoroughly individualistic, but at the same time completely supra-personal basis of working described above.

### **D.N. Dunlop – a long-standing plagiarist?**

Seen against this background, it must be surprising to suddenly find D.N. Dunlop 'exposed' as a ten-year-long plagiarist, initially operating covertly and later in a blatantly public fashion; thus 'exposed' as being driven by petty motives and using the work of others for personal gain, in an egoistic and not exactly tactful manner.

This has actually been suggested by Crispian Villeneuve, author of the recently published two-volume work, *Rudolf Steiner in Britain – A Documentation of his Ten Visits*.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from Rudolf Steiner, the individuality of Dunlop—who generally seems to be highly appreciated by Villeneuve, and about whom he reveals some hitherto unknown facts—possibly plays the most central role in his two-volume work. As the author of the biography of D.N. Dunlop,<sup>4</sup> to which Villeneuve makes frequent reference, I consider it incumbent on me to respond to these accusations of plagiarism against Dunlop. The main question that I am addressing here is: What, in fact, has Crispian Villeneuve been able to substantiate?

### **The Facts**

In 1910 D.N. Dunlop and Charles Lazenby launch the monthly journal *The Path*. (It was discontinued in 1914). In the imprint of Volume I, No. 2, published in July 1910, we read the following: 'Articles may be freely quoted without any reference to source.'

In 1911 Dunlop publishes in *The Path* his lecture about 'Friendship' that was given at the Blavatsky Institute (also founded by him). The first part of this lecture contains a number of direct quotations from an article published earlier by H.W. Percival in his own journal, *The Word*. Each edition of *The Word* contained substantial editorials, which, though unsigned, were in fact written by Percival and appeared in the journal's year-end index under 'Editorials'. In October 1911 Dunlop publishes another lecture that he had given—'Individuality and Personality'—which had as its basis one of Percival's editorials from 1906 entitled 'Individuality', some of the details of which Dunlop modified or expanded upon. He also publishes the lectures 'The Law of Periodicity' and 'Breath', and briefly mentions the series of editorials in *The Word* entitled 'The Zodiac'.

In October 1912 Dunlop publishes in *The Path* a series of Zodiac articles that are largely identical to the series of the same name that Percival had first published in *The Word*. A footnote in this edition of *The Path* reads: 'I wish to take this opportunity of acknowledging my indebtedness to my friend, H.W. Percival, editor of *The Word*, for the help received from him in the studies on the Zodiac, and at the same time to thank him for his kind permission to utilise matter and illustrations already used in *The Word*.'<sup>5</sup> One article of the Zodiac series that was reprinted without any changes was published with the entry: 'Reprinted from *The Word*'. In June 1912, Dunlop announces that his two lectures about 'Friendship' will be published in book-form. He sends the booklet to Percival—probably around the end of 1914. In one of his own editorials written during 1913 Dunlop draws attention to the fact that 'Mr Percival edits a journal, *The Word*—a theosophical journal that deserves wide circulation'.

In 1916 Dunlop sends Percival a copy of his book, *The Path of Attainment* which appeared in the same year. On 10<sup>th</sup> August 1916 Percival declares in a letter to the theosophist Albert Smythe that he had written to Dunlop, asking for an explanation for his borrowings from *The Word*. According to Percival, Dunlop replied that Percival

himself had drawn on H.P. Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* or other generally available sources. 'His letters, his answers', writes Percival, 'were contemptible excuses.' Percival remarks further that he expected Dunlop 'either to cease publishing his [Dunlop's] articles or else give credit to *The Word* for what it published ( . . . ) Later on he did mention *The Word* in a series of articles on the Zodiac.'

As a final example of what Percival considered to be improper behaviour on the part of Dunlop, he mentions the forwarding of another of Dunlop's books: 'Within the last few months,' writes Percival, 'he had the audacity to send me a book which he claimed to have written on Discipleship. In it were mangled extracts from editorials in *The Word*.' With regard to this last example, Crispian Villeneuve remarked in a conversation with me that Percival's comments could only refer to Dunlop's book *The Path of Attainment* (see above), and contrary to Percival's claims, Dunlop did not, in fact, borrow from his writings in this work.

In January 1918 Dunlop publishes his book *The Science of Immortality* containing two editorials that have partially been adapted from Percival's *The Word*. At the close of the foreword Dunlop comments: 'Credit is due to Mr. H.W. Percival, editor of *The Word*, published in New York, for his original work on the philosophy of the Zodiac, and I acknowledge my indebtedness to him.' This is the last published reference that Dunlop makes to Percival.

Dunlop subsequently produces a few more publications containing elements that originate in the editorials of *The Word*, the last of which appear in the printed version of a lecture given by him about 'Nature Spirits and the Spirits of the Elements'.

Percival only makes his authorship of all articles in *The Word* explicit after it ceases publication in April 1918.

For the purpose of an analysis of Dunlop and Percival's relationship through the documents available to Villeneuve and the author of this article, it must be noted that on Percival's side, only the one letter fragment from the year 1916 appears to exist (see above). Dunlop's letters to Percival either no longer exist or have yet to be discovered.

### **The personal relationship between D.N. Dunlop and H.W. Percival**

H.W. Percival became a member of the Theosophical Society in 1892, one year after Dunlop. Dunlop travelled to New York for the first time in 1896 and relocated there together with his family in 1897, staying for two years. Although there is no documentary evidence that Dunlop met Percival personally, this possibility should not be entirely excluded on these grounds. After all, in *The Path*, October 1912, Dunlop names Percival as 'My friend, Mr H.W. Percival ...' (see above). Why would Dunlop describe a man that he had never met or with whom he had never had personal or friendly correspondence as 'his friend'?

### **Evaluation of the available evidence**

As we can learn little about the true relationship of these two individuals from written documentation, particular caution should be exercised when attempting to interpret the information that is available. It is a fact that over the years Dunlop borrowed from Percival's editorials, both partially and in their entirety. However, does this entitle us to interpret the spirit in which this was done?<sup>6</sup>

In order to come to a fuller understanding of this intriguing set of circumstances, I would like to offer the following considerations: Dunlop's editorial comment presented earlier—'Articles may be freely quoted without any reference to source'—suggests that he placed little value on emphasising personal authorship. As an old Templar individuality he was familiar with the practice of working anonymously. In this day and age, however, *personal* authorship is required—or at least expected. Dunlop endorsed this to a certain degree in the articles he wrote for different journals: Some were published anonymously, others appeared under a pseudonym or were actually signed with his own name—evidently also including those articles that only partially originated with him. Did Percival at some stage offer Dunlop the same policy for quoting material from *The Word* as described by Dunlop in *The Path*? (see above)—later withdrawing his offer or

forgetting that he had done so? If that was the case, did Dunlop simply take Percival at his word? *Something of this nature must at least be considered as a possibility.*

Percival's letter contains, amongst other things, a false accusation of plagiarism. Is there any guarantee that it does not contain other errors and misrepresentations of Dunlop's replies to Percival that we ourselves cannot know about?

Is it in the nature of a plagiarist to produce his or her own articles in abundance, while at the same time partly plagiarising the work of others—and always that of the same people?

Is it usual for a plagiarist to promote the 'stolen product'? (Dunlop hoped that Percival's journal *The Word* would have 'a wide circulation'. *See above.*)

Is it a plagiarist's modus operandi to send his publication containing the 'stolen fruit' to its original author, possibly together with a personal note?

### **A 'Complex Personality'**

The facts presented by Villeneuve in his book are indisputable. His interpretation and evaluation of these facts, however, are another matter. Villeneuve establishes the core of his investigation on page 668 of Volume II in footnote 22: 'A charge of plagiarism founded on the close comparison of documents whose separate authorship and date are readily ascertainable cannot justifiably be dismissed (...)'

I do not consider this assessment to be valid. Villeneuve's accusation of plagiarism goes far beyond the obvious conclusions that may be drawn from the available facts, implying 'motives' that must be characterised as the very opposite of noble. An example of this may be found in the following passage from the same footnote of Villeneuve's book: 'But Dunlop's whole modus operandi was altogether more mercurial, and sometimes in a sense risky. One obituarist described him as 'a complex personality', and even if the full story of his relationship with Percival is not contained in the surviving documents, *it is clear that a problematic element was involved.*' (Italics THM). Or: 'The expression 'my friend', however, is more likely to have been used by Dunlop in late 1912 in an attempt to establish good relations with Percival after his previously unacknowledged borrowings in 1911-12 had been discovered (...)' . With this viewpoint, Villeneuve dismisses entirely the possibility of a genuine friendship between the two, declaring that not only was Dunlop a plagiarist, but to make matters worse, he was also a hypocrite, having approached the 'injured party' with insincere offers of friendship.

It is evident from these passages that Villeneuve's conclusions amount to a moral judgment of certain 'weaknesses' in Dunlop which he is not prepared to emphasise too strongly and probably for this reason, has relegated to an over-long footnote—where, hardly noticeable and in homeopathic dosage, they may nevertheless unfold an even stronger effect. Villeneuve considers my contention of a possible or even probable friendship between Percival and Dunlop as 'completely fictitious', even though he is not in a position to deny with certainty the existence of these personal relationships. Therefore Villeneuve himself cannot be spared an accusation of 'fictitious construct', in that he goes far beyond these admittedly astonishing and enigmatic facts and attributes 'motives' to Dunlop that could only be truly known through clairvoyant perception, or logical inference on the basis of further documents which have not yet come to light. Villeneuve, however, does not claim to have access to either of these means.

Thus, in the case presented here, an accusation of 'plagiarism' (implying personal motives, of course) is a premature interpretation of the actual facts.

### **Preliminary Conclusions**

The problem raised by Villeneuve therefore does not lie in his assessment of the facts, but rather in his belief that he is in a position to determine the *motives* involved. According to Villeneuve's portrayal of the situation, Dunlop's motives could only have been *personal*—a consequence of his 'complex personality'. Villeneuve, in fact, guards against naming such motives clearly and openly; *instead he draws the reader's attention to the 'problematic' element in Dunlop*, which, at the very least, must generate diffuse perceptions of the latter's 'weaknesses'. Villeneuve will find the approval of those who

are uneasy, or in the long run become uneasy in their relationship to a great individuality, unless they discover a few ‘weaknesses’ that will bring them closer. The same phenomenon occurs in relation to Rudolf Steiner about whom certain ‘weaknesses’ have recently been ‘discovered’ in many quarters.

On a number of occasions in the past, I have endeavoured to indicate to Crispian Villeneuve—to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude for his research—that it seems important to acknowledge his investigations into this matter, *but without coming to speculative conclusions about ‘motive’*, which, in fact, is not possible if one employs the concept of ‘plagiarism’.

Instead of publicly circulating an accusation of plagiarism and its moralising implications, would it not have been better to act according to the maxim *in dubio pro reo*? Villeneuve has rather chosen to pronounce a premature judgment, despite the inconclusive nature of the matter. Consequently, however, he has also incurred the risk of being the first person to introduce a certain slanderous element into the public evaluation of Dunlop’s life and work.

### **D.N. Dunlop’s Supra-Personal Striving**

A plagiariser can be characterised as a person whose striving is to ‘claim all the glory’ for his personal ego, acting therefore out of the purely personal motives of vanity and ambition. If there was one person in the theosophical-anthroposophical movement who’s striving was, from the beginning, to act rigorously out of supra-personal motives—it was D.N. Dunlop. The meditations given by Mabel Collins in *Light on the Path* became his flesh and blood. Sentences such as ‘Kill out ambition’, ‘yet work as those work who are ambitious’ became part of his life substance. All errors and difficulties in spiritual-occult development are connected to the task of gradually eliminating ‘ambition, vanity and untruthfulness’.

Already in 1893 Dunlop wrote about the foundations underlying these questions in an editorial for the monthly journal *The Irish Theosophist*. (At that time he and the poet and painter AE published the latter journal together.) The essay is entitled ‘By-paths in Occult Progress’ and begins with the following words: ‘One of the objects which we, as members of the Theosophical Society, set before ourselves is to strive after a realisation of man’s higher destiny in our own selves. We believe in the existence of higher powers, and a sublimer state of consciousness than that which we experience now. We believe that the attainment of this exalted condition depends upon the abandonment of personal interests, which are a snare and a delusion, and the aspiring towards a universal consciousness which we shall share with all creation, and in which we shall feel by sympathy the throb of every human heart, and have not secret joys or sorrows unshared by others. Sick of the narrow limits of our personality; weary of private ambitions, love, and speculations; distracted by the never-ceasing panorama of our own moods, now of gratulation, now of remorse; now of cold cynicism, now of morbid sentimentality, we long to escape from that importunate demon of self-consciousness which is ever at our side instilling into our cup of joy the poison of pleasure, and marring our healthy spontaneity of feeling with its whisperings of vanity and egotism. ‘Let me feel myself in these people, let me share their joys and sorrows so I may help them!’ is the cry of the soul; but the personality—exacting spouse created by our self in the past—steps between and snatches our love for itself.

To paralyse this personality, to make it an obedient slave, and to learn to take away our attention from it and listen to the voice of the Oversoul—this is . . . true practical occultism.’<sup>7</sup>

Dunlop reprinted this essay in *The Path* in September 1910—around the same time, according to Villeneuve, that he began operating as a plagiarist.

In the light of Dunlop’s own words quoted above, if we once again consider Villeneuve’s attempt to ascribe trivial personal motives to Dunlop by accusing him of plagiarism, then we must ask ourselves: Could such an attempt be inspired by the ‘Oversoul’?

And yet, is it not possible to gain something positive from this charge of plagiarism?

I think, yes: Crispian Villeneuve's unsuccessful line of argument enables the supra-personal striving of D.N. Dunlop to shine forth even more brightly.

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*Translated from the German by Ireine Czech*

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<sup>1</sup> [www.worldenergy.org/wec-geis/wec\\_info/history/history.asp](http://www.worldenergy.org/wec-geis/wec_info/history/history.asp)

<sup>2</sup> T. H. Meyer, *D.N. Dunlop – A Man of Our Time*, Temple Lodge, London, 1992. Foreword by Owen Barfield, p.193 and note 144 p.432.

<sup>3</sup> Crispian Villeneuve, *Rudolf Steiner in Britain – A Documentation of his Ten Visits*, Two Volumes, Temple Lodge, London, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> See note 2.

<sup>5</sup> *The Path*, October 1912, Volume 3, No. 4, p.160.

<sup>6</sup> Villeneuve pays no attention to the fact that as a rule Dunlop did not only shorten or expand the texts that he borrowed from Percival, but often also meticulously reworked them, and in the sense of spiritual science, developed and improved them; also a possible reason not to have acknowledged Percival's authorship.

<sup>7</sup> See note 2. Quote reprinted, pp.54-55.