

FOREWORD

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IN MAY 1906, Rudolf Steiner came to Paris with a number of students to give a series of private lectures to a small circle of friends. I myself had never seen him and did not even know of his existence, but I had begun correspondence on the subject of one of my dramas (*The Children of Lucifer*) with his friend Mademoiselle von Sivers, who later became his wife and his most understanding colleague. She brought her teacher to my house one happy morning.

I shall never forget the extraordinary impression made upon me by this man when he entered the room. As I looked at that thin, powerful face, at the black mysterious eyes flashing light as if from unfathomable depths, it struck me that for the first time in my life I was facing one of those supreme seers who have direct vision of the great beyond. Intuitively and poetically, I had described such seers in *The Great Initiates*, but I had never hoped to meet one in this world. The impression was instantaneous and irresistible, unexpected as well as already known. Even before he opened his lips, an inner voice said to me: Here is a true master, one who will play an all-important part in your life.

Our subsequent relations would prove that this first impression was not an illusion. The program of the daily lectures, of which the speaker told me in advance, aroused my keenest interest. The lectures would cover the whole field of his philosophy, although it was possible to develop only

certain outstanding points. One would have said that the teacher's purpose was to offer a vista of the general plan from its own heights. His fervent, convincing eloquence, irradiated by invariable clarity of thought, struck me at once as possessing two outstanding and unusual qualities.

First was its artistic power. When Rudolf Steiner spoke of the phenomena and beings of the invisible world, he seemed at home. With striking details and in familiar terms he told of events in these unknown realms, just as though he were speaking of the most ordinary matters. He did not describe but actually *saw* and made others see the objects, scenes, and cosmic vistas in clear-cut reality. Listening to him, one could not doubt the power of his astral vision; it was as limpid as physical vision, but much more penetrating.

Another characteristic, equally remarkable was that this philosopher and mystic, this thinker and clairvoyant, connected all experiences of soul to the immutable laws of physical nature. Those laws were used to explain and classify the suprasensory phenomena that appear before the seer, initially, in an overwhelming variety and almost bewildering abundance. Then, by a wonderful counter-stroke, these subtle, fluidic phenomena, proceeding from cosmic powers grouped in a great hierarchy, began to illumine the edifice of material nature. The diverse parts of nature were linked together, related to these cosmic powers from the heights to the depths, from the depths to the heights, and a vista of the grand architecture of the universe opened up from the inner world, where the visible is forever coming to birth from the womb of the invisible.

I took no notes of the first lecture, but it made such a vivid impression upon me that, once I reached home, I felt a need to write it down without forgetting a single link in the chain of these illuminating thoughts. I had absorbed the lecture so completely that I found no difficulty at all. By a process of involuntary and instantaneous transmutation, the German words, which had ingrained themselves in my memory,

changed into French. The same thing, repeated after each of the eighteen lectures, gradually grew into a dossier that I keep as a rich and rare store of treasure. These lectures, which were never transcribed or revised by Rudolf Steiner, do not exist in the archives of his public lectures or in the collection of lectures duplicated for members of the Anthroposophical Society. They are, therefore, entirely unedited. A number of members of the French Group of the Society have expressed the desire to publish them as a book, and Mademoiselle Rihouet, the editor of *La Science Spirituelle*, kindly offered the pages of that magazine. I respond all the more readily to this desire, because these priceless lectures mark a significant phase of Rudolf Steiner's thought: the spontaneous burst of his genius and its first crystallization. Moreover, it gives me joy to pay this new tribute to that teacher to whom I owe one of the great revelations of my life.

I. THE ORIGIN OF ESOTERIC CHRISTIANITY

These lectures offer a kind of summary of what Rudolf Steiner calls *Anthroposophy*. In this foreword, I do not pretend to give anything like a resumé of this vast, all-embracing philosophy. Its principles are contained in a *theogony*, *cosmogony*, and *psychology*, complete in themselves. It lays the foundation of a moral philosophy, an art of education, a science of aesthetics. The teaching of this thinker and seer extends into all and every area of life. His sweeping vision embraces the whole history of humanity and imbues modern science with spiritual concepts, without even a hair's breadth distortion from its exactitude and pristine clarity. My only purpose here is to point out the most strikingly new chapters, for they lead us again to the very roots of this sublime thought.

At the time he was delivering these lectures, Rudolf Steiner was still the General Secretary for Germany of the Theosophical Society, whose headquarters is in Madras. The society, originally founded by H. P. Blavatsky, has Mrs. Annie Besant

as its present president. Despite the many gaps and ultimate digressions, this theoretical system of Eastern thought—which originated in India and derived its name *Theosophy* from Alexandrian tradition—served to recall for the uninitiated West the two fundamental tenets of all esoteric tradition: 1) The plurality of progressive lives of the human soul under the law of karma, and 2) ascending human evolution under the influence of spiritual powers. When Rudolf Steiner entered the Theosophical Society (which he had chosen as his initial field of activity), he had already mastered fully the doctrine he owed to his own initiation. These lectures, given in the year 1906, are proof of this fact.*

The essential difference between Indian Theosophy and Anthroposophy lies in the supreme role that Anthroposophy attributes to the Christ in human evolution, as well as its connection with Rosicrucian tradition. This appears clearly in the first two lectures, entitled: “The Birth of the Intellect and the Mission of Christianity” and “The Mission of Manicheism.” More clearly than any other esotericist, Rudolf Steiner saw the profound change that has come about through the ages in the human constitution of body and soul and in the human means of perceiving truth. In ancient, pre-Christian times, human beings were endowed universally with a faculty of “atavistic” clairvoyance. During the Atlantean period, human beings lived more in the “world beyond” than in this world. Clairvoyance was the outstanding faculty and the chief mode of human cognition, but perception of higher worlds was confused and chaotic. That faculty weakened and gradually faded in the course of evolution; reason and the mere *observation* of nature came to the forefront. The yoga of the Indian *rishis* (the source of Aryan mythology and religion) represents an effective endeavor to regain the lost power of clairvoyance and, at the same time, to regulate it according to cosmic laws. But

* For more on this topic, see Rudolf Steiner, *Spiritualism, Madame Blavatsky, and Theosophy: An Eyewitness View of Occult History*, Great Barrington, MA: Anthroposophic Press, 2001.

shortly before the coming of Christ, humanity had reached the last stage of descent into matter and passed through a perilous crisis. The passions emanating from the animal stage, beyond which human beings had now passed, threatened to engulf them. Civilization itself was in peril. The human psyche—having freed herself from primitive darkness through long struggle—was threatened by the decadence of Greece and the orgies of Rome.*

2. JESUS CHRIST AS THE AXIS OF HUMAN EVOLUTION: THE ROSICRUCIAN INITIATION

This lecture deals with the dangers that necessitated the Incarnation of the “Word that was in the beginning,” the divine Logos who became a human being. The mission of Jesus Christ had been foretold long before in the sanctuaries of India, Persia, and Chaldea, proclaimed in the vision of the risen Osiris and of the “Sun at Midnight” in the crypts of ancient Egypt. The human race had reached such a degree of materialisation that salvation was made possible only by a manifestation of the Divine Spirit on the physical plane. And so the Light that, until then, had not descended further than the Moon, this “Light of grace and truth,” came down into the darkness of the lower earthly realms, to incarnate in the man Jesus of Nazareth to become the axis of human evolution.

A grand revolution, a change of incalculable significance, occurred in the inner planes—one destined to transform the whole world. The result was a complete change in human mentality, the two poles of which were, in a sense, reversed. A separation took place between these two outstanding faculties: sensibility and intelligence, intuition and reason. Until this time, intuitive sight had dominated, and reason had played

* For more on this and following references to cosmic and human evolution, see Rudolf Steiner, *An Outline of Esoteric Science*, Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1997.

a secondary role; science had remained the docile servant of religion. Primordial wisdom had been a combination of the two. The conquest and mastery of the material world had become the goal of humanity. Reason gained the upper hand, and instinctive feeling would henceforth live its life apart. On the one side was the triumph of reason in Aristotelian thought, and on the other religious feeling reached a climax in contemplation of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Science and religion became two separate powers and then, shortly thereafter, rivals and mortal enemies. In religion, the Cross of Christ was sufficient for salvation. By contrast, science soon proclaimed that only it possesses reality, which has passed through the sieve of physical observation and syllogism; hence the dualism that has divided and torn apart human consciousness for the past two millennia. The advantage of this has been the development—to the extreme—of the two poles of the soul, the two dominating faculties of intelligence.

In our time, however, pure reason has driven intuition from science and insight from education, and our materialistic civilization has reached such a condition of anarchy that its very existence is threatened. From the outset, the aim of Christian esotericism was to heal that dualism, to cultivate ideas capable of reconciling the two enemy powers of religion and science, of intuition and reason, the combined knowledge and operation of which alone can reach truth and ensure the healthy development of humankind.

Esoteric tradition has always been characterized by two fundamental principles: First, the plurality of progressive soul existences and second, knowledge of the origin of evil and the means whereby humankind may become its victor. All great teachers of esoteric doctrine have enjoined their pupils to go along two paths of initiation simultaneously to guarantee reaching truth. The *path of mysticism*, or ecstatic contemplation of the spiritual world, and the *path of rationalism*, synthetic contemplation of the visible universe in the light of archetypal ideas that arise from the spiritual hierarchies but

are attainable by human intelligence through intuition, even when direct clairvoyance is not present. It seems that everyone will be deeply interested in reading the notes of Rudolf Steiner's seventh lecture ("Esotericism and the Gospel of St. John"), in which he describes how the Rosicrucians worked to unite themselves with the Christ by meditating the first fourteen verses in the Gospel of St. John. In successive visions, the Rosicrucians relived the seven stages of Calvary, from the *scourging* and *crowning with thorns*, the *bearing of the Cross* to the *mystic Death* and *ineffable Resurrection*. Bathed in an ocean of love, they heard the resounding Logos, the "Word that was in the beginning," radiating the spiritual Light that pervades the whole universe and is the creator of souls. The cosmic meaning attached to these stations of the Cross is deeply moving and provocative of thought.*

3. THE INTERIOR OF THE EARTH AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Rather than lingering on the Rosicrucian initiation that reveals the axis of Christianity and carries us into the realms of the world invisible, let me point specifically to lecture 16, the novelty of which is no less striking. Rudolf Steiner gives us a striking example of his way of contemplating visible nature as a means of penetrating her essential being. It is as though matter became translucent, and suddenly the hidden spirit was revealed. The highly suggestive title of this lecture is "Earthquakes, Volcanoes, and the Human Will." The special significance is that its main theme is related to the very roots of human nature.

The mystery of the Earth's interior, the basis and stage of human evolution, is one of the numerous problems that

* Of related interest is Rudolf Steiner, *Christianity as Mystical Fact: And the Mysteries of Antiquity*, Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 2006; and Rudolf Steiner, *The Christian Mystery: Early Lectures*, Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1998.

materialistic science has never been able to solve. Unceasing research has not helped. Many scholars imagine the Earth's interior as an igneous mass, capable of bursting the crust of the Earth; others imagine it as a compact mass of mineral substance, which explains neither volcanos nor earthquakes. The Earth is a living *being*, as are the planets and suns, endowed with an interior organism indispensable to its functions and its role in the Cosmos. Steiner sees the Earth's constitution in the form of nine layers—or, rather, as nine layers embedded one within the other.

The eight interior layers under the Earth's crust represent, as it were, the physiological organs of our planet from which its life emanates and upon which this life depends. The substance of these eight inner spheres does not resemble the mineral matter that forms the outer crust and, in a sense, the skin of the Earth. The elements composing these layers are half liquid and half gaseous. The fire principle—the air-fire, mobile and pregnant with life, as well as a reservoir of will impulses and the cause of volcanic eruptions—is only one of the spheres embedded one within the other. It is the fourth from the center, or the fifth from the outer mineral crust. The interior fire communicates with the crust along paths that are veritably “ventilating tracts,” hence the volcanic eruptions on the surface of the Earth.*

If we glance momentary at the interior constitution of the Earth, one fact strikes us immediately—it makes up the forces concentrated in the planet and worked at its development through successive metamorphoses, from the nebula of Saturn through the Old Sun and Old Moon periods and on to its present state. These same forces have worked at the human structure and today are more active than ever. 1) *Egoism and black magic* constitute the opaque center of the Earth, because egoism—love of self for its own sake, which black magic exaggerates and takes to excess—is indispensable to

* For more, see Rudolf Steiner, *The Interior of the Earth: An Esoteric Study of the Subterranean Spheres*, London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2007.

the development of human individuality. The fatal products of egoism are hatred and strife, represented by the next two layers: 2) *division* and 3) the *prism*, in which individualities multiply and differentiate in order to battle with one another.

It may be said that these three layers represent the Earth's kernel as it existed in the nebula of the Saturn period. This foundation is indispensable to all of the Earth's subsequent evolution. It is the springboard from which individuality can rise to higher worlds, as long as egoism (the principle of evil) is conquered and transformed by the higher forces arising from the Sun and the firmament—forces of which divinity is the wellspring, and true human freedom the sculptor.

The period during which the Earth was still united with the Moon is indicated within the Earth by the existence of three other elementary spheres: 4) the *Fire principle* is at the root of will impulses and the cause of volcanic eruptions when a path is forged to Earth's mineral crust. 5) Above this is the level of organic *plant life*. Again, 6) there is a still higher level of the *vortex of animal forces*, where the ethereal embryos of the living beings destined to crawl, walk, and fly germinate and attain life in a laboratory of ceaseless activity.

In this second trinity of forces that constitute Earth's interior, we find the remains of the period when Earth was still united with the Moon. In those times, the Earth's surface was a kind of porous substance, the home of hybrid beings, half vegetable and half mollusc, with giant tentacles, while the seeds of terrestrial flora and fauna floated in the semi-liquid, semi-vaporous atmosphere. Wonderful words in the book of Genesis refer to this period: "Darkness was upon the face of the deep and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the Waters."

The third trio of inner organs of the Earth represents its actual form. The final metamorphosis occurs at the time of separation of the Moon from Earth; it is indicated by the addition of two new elements that are, as it were, the "humanized" replica of the Earth's center: 7) *Consciousness inverted*, in

which everything is transformed into its opposite; 8) *Negative life*, or *death*. Every living being descending into this realm must perish instantly; it is the *Styx* of the Greeks, cursed by the Gods of life and beauty. 9) Above the sphere of death stretches the *solid mineral* envelope of the Earth, the theater of humanity.

It must be admitted that this extraordinary description of the interior constitution of our planet cannot be verified by any means of observation adopted by natural science. None but a seer possessed of equal power could contradict or confirm it. Alternatively, it is certainly impossible to deny that this scheme of the Earth's constitution opens up amazing vistas of human evolution. Clairvoyance itself bears a unique power of persuasion, and its truth may, to a degree, be demonstrated by effects that reveal themselves in human beings. The parallels between the cosmic fire and human passions, their close relationship, mutual action, and reaction, shed much light on the origin of evil. Many historians have stated that the great crises in history (wars, revolutions, and social upheavals) are nearly always accompanied and followed by earthly cataclysms (earthquakes or volcanic eruptions). Human passions magnetically affect the Earth's interior fire, and this fire, when released from its chains, feeds human passions. Thus fire, which is destined to generate life, begets evil through human volition.

Nevertheless, the Earth, having as its kernel the egoism that is indispensable to the development of individuality, is the solid, immutable foundation upon which the soul can find support to soar into spirit worlds that shelter and shape her through the power of the solar Logos. Evil becomes a leaven of evolution, finally to be conquered by goodness. Those who have won through to freedom hold the balance between destiny and providence from the moment they are able to choose between good and evil. Yearning for the Divine begets enthusiasm. By their own efforts, they can draw near to the sublime truth ruling the universe. Thus Satan-Ahriman—the demon

of negation and hatred—is laid low by the genius of infinite love radiating in the Logos, the Christ. And Lucifer, the spirit of intelligence and beauty, released from his sojourn in the lower world of matter, is on the point of taking flight to his star. Yet Ahriman, Lucifer's dire companion, is held in check by the Christ but works to break his chains so that Lucifer's flight may be prevented.



Anthroposophy is the most potent means in our present era to restore the severed harmony between the worlds of matter and spirit, between science and religion. It is also the agent for reestablishing peace in social affairs.

In truth the hour is serious. Humanity has never faced such a great danger. The forces of evil are mobilized, but not those of goodness. This is proven by the unprecedented ravages of Bolshevism, the relentless application of destructive materialism. A gathering of all the spiritual forces available to humanity will be needed to combat this scourge. But a wide and high ideal is necessary. Human beings would gladly know where feet are taking them in this world and in the one beyond. They need a sublime goal in the one, and the beginnings of actual realization of the other. "Evil can be conquered only by a high ideal" says Rudolf Steiner. "Those without an ideal are weak and powerless. In a person's life, ideals play the role of steam in an engine; they are the driving force."

The knowledge gained by Rudolf Steiner during his life and his apostolate of a quarter of a century is scattered throughout his writings and numerous lecture courses, most of which have been recorded. The special interest attached to these lectures of 1906 is that they show the genius of this thinker-seer at the beginning of his career and the zenith of his inspiration, at the very moment when his all-embracing thought was coming into its own, fully armed. Those who read these notes may catch, here and there, an echo of the power of the master's

living words. A striking example of this impressed itself upon me during a lecture he once gave: “The thoughts of the Gods are not as human thoughts. Human thoughts are images; the thoughts of the gods are *living beings*.”

Revelations like this flash out into the Infinite. They are an echo from far away of the Word creative invoked by St. John at the beginning of his Gospel. Their vibrations thrill through us like the Sound Primordial whence shines the light—the Sound whose harmonies bring worlds to birth.