

Spirit Man

The Cosmology of Rudolf Steiner

Compiled by

Steve Kasperowicz

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In Memory of

Marjorie VanCleve

&

Eric Wakefield

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Foreword

I used to be a dyed in the wool agnostic, who paradoxically, had a keen interest in the occult. In my high school and college years, along with the works of Ayn Rand, J. R. R. Tolkien and Aldous Huxley, I was drawn to books such as "Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain" and "A Dweller on Two Planets", where the line between fantasy and reality was less clear. From there, I graduated to the works of Richard Bach, Carlos Castaneda, and others, whose descriptions of alternate realities fascinated me.

In those younger years I also encountered the works of Rudolf Steiner. A multi-faceted genius, Steiner had made significant and innovative contributions throughout his life in a variety of fields that included medicine, drama, science, religion, education, philosophy, economics, agriculture, and architecture. John Davie has said that because of his varied initiatives, one can find throughout the world today, schools, communities, businesses, farms, hospitals, banks, artists, and architects that acknowledge a special debt to his work. Steiner's reputation, however, is based on far more than these mainstream accomplishments. He is unarguably most recognized for his extensive and revealing research into the realms of the spirit, the results of which led to his being regarded as "The Scientist of the Invisible".

From his childhood, Steiner already possessed the ability to perceive the supersensible—to see the reality of the spiritual world with the same clarity and certainty as he saw the physical. As he matured, he felt a profound need to bring a discipline to his supersensible discoveries—to develop a methodology equal to what the natural science of his day demanded. While earning degrees in mathematics, physics and chemistry at the Technical University in Vienna, he began developing an approach to a systematic research of psychological and spiritual phenomena. His doctoral thesis "Truth and Knowledge" was followed, in 1894, by "The Philosophy of Freedom", a seminal work in which Steiner established a firm foundation for a science of the supersensible. From there, he went on to write dozens of books, among them "Theosophy", "Knowledge of Higher Worlds and its Attainment", and "Occult Science—An Outline". He also wrote hundreds of essays and delivered over six thousand lectures on a multiplicity of topics.

In spite of the fact that their content was in such stark contrast to a conventional wisdom and science to which I so strongly adhered, his books, essays and lectures nonetheless resonated within me—struck some inner chord of truth. And although I found that Steiner's works lacked the entertaining literary style of the more modern writers mentioned above, I continued to study his published legacy, reading one work after another, then reading them

again, usually in no specific order. In each book or lecture series, I would discover new concepts or revelations somehow missed during earlier readings. Contradictions I might have uncovered in one reading would disappear with the next—and, more often than not, new ones would arise. In many of Steiner's presentations, he would intentionally communicate the same topic from a variety of perspectives. And I, like one of the blind men confronting the elephant, would on one occasion feel a rope, while on another, a tree trunk—aptly demonstrating the limitations of what Steiner described as "a thinking fettered by the senses". But my lack of clear comprehension of the material never dissuaded me from continuing the study.

So, years after my first encounter with "Occult Science", and my earlier skepticism all but turned around, I decided to compile selected sections of Steiner's work for a wider audience. It has been one hundred years since their initial presentation, and, with recent cultural shifts in attitude, I feel there are more who share an interest in a cosmic view of human evolution—individuals who are willing to explore beyond the self-imposed limits of the natural sciences and seek an insight into the world of spirit. Having completed two original works during the past few years, I thought this would be an easy project, since all I had to do was select from what Steiner had already presented, and arrange it to be accessible and interesting to the modern reader. The task, however, proved far

more difficult than I had first thought. For, to Steiner, the efforts expended by his audience in approaching what he presented, were integral to the educational process. It would have been a disservice, therefore, to try to make the subject matter more accessible, or water it down for wider acceptability.

What follows then, is a distillation of many of the works of Rudolf Steiner, Ph.D. (1861-1925) that deal with the cosmology of Man. Because I omitted material of an introductory nature, it is primarily intended for an audience already convinced that a spiritual reality permeates the universe. Those who do not share such a conviction, or who, as I once did, find much of the material incomprehensible and fantastic, may hopefully acknowledge the possibility that reality is not limited to only what is perceptible by the senses, and that what is herein presented is at least plausible.

Although the content of what follows has been accessible in occult mystery centers throughout the ages, the masters traditionally conveyed it to prepared neophytes through symbols rather than conventional languages. This text, therefore, contains the difficulties inherent in presenting the world of soul and spirit in a language that is grounded in temporal concepts. It demands an immense amount of good will on the part of the reader to set aside conventional thinking and any predisposition toward a specific worldview in order to approach the concepts it contains. The supersen-

sible worlds are every bit as complex as our sense perceptible world. So, beyond good will and determination, it helps to have a loving open heart, a healthy feeling for truth, and enlivened mobile thinking. A sense of humor wouldn't hurt either. Because the material can be somewhat serious, I'd recommend interspersing sections of this book with selections from humorists Dave Barry or Douglas Adams, whose personal perspectives of reality refreshingly complement Steiner's.

At one time, I thought it would be interesting to compare the alternate realities of Bach and Castaneda with those of Steiner, because each portrays the same supersensible realities using their own unique nomenclature. Steiner's 'meditation' is Castaneda's 'stopping the internal dialog.' The 'sentient body' in one is a 'luminous egg' in the other. But Bach and Castaneda limit themselves to the here and now, ignoring the broader context. They provide colorful, personal pictures of a modern path of initiation, but leave us wanting for explanations on the why of it all. We become immersed in a world of power and mystery, of the drama and comedy that constitutes the human condition, but are left floundering for perspective and direction.

Most of us, I believe, view our day to day world through the perspective sliver of a single lifetime. Some may view it from the wider window provided by written or oral history, while

still others may approach their reality through the broader boundaries defined by archeology. My guess, though, is that few view their personal world through the cosmic expanse that encompasses the beginning and end of time. If you are new to what Steiner presented to the world in his books, essays and hundreds of lectures on the nature of humanity, be prepared to make stupendous leaps to the far distant past and far distant future, and into completely different dimensions of being. And though you may find the material ponderous, or hard to accept, you can be sure that it will not leave you unaffected. You may find instead that the mundane in the world begins to reveal the miraculous.

Preface

The fact that the unaided human eye is limited from seeing beyond the infrared and ultraviolet, of seeing what is transpiring within the living cell or in the far reaches of space, has not deterred researchers from launching scientific investigations into these areas.

There are, however, individuals who have unfolded faculties for perceiving the supersensible—who engage themselves in equally objective research into those branches of knowledge whose realms lie beyond what is physically perceptible. Those who believe that such research is pure fantasy do not realize that all who have attained the requisite level of initiation will each observe the exact same supersensible phenomena—just as each individual possessing normal sight will see a table as being round or square. Although no man is free from error in any field, what various initiates have conveyed regarding their findings has been in essential agreement for millennia.

In the same sense that we do not have to be microbiologists or astrophysicists to appreciate what those scientists convey about their disciplines, we do not ourselves need to be clairvoyant in order to understand the facts that are revealed by investigators into the supersensible—to use the same judgment in accepting the results of their research.

1

Man

The human spirit is as little newly created at birth as a man is newly created upon awakening each morning.

Before many of Dr. Steiner's presentations dealing with the origin and evolution of Man, he would begin with a description of the human being as he stands before us today. In conformance with this practice, therefore, this chapter introduces the modern human being in a way that highlights those major components that were 'built up' during specific and separate periods of our evolution. These specific evolutionary periods, which will be described later, endowed us with what we have in common with the mineral kingdom, the plant kingdom and the animal kingdom—and what on earth is exclusively Man's. We will see that we are essentially threefold beings comprised of body, soul and spirit. And that each of these is also threefold in nature. To begin then, we'll start with a description of Man's physical nature.

The Physical Body

The physical body is that part of the human being that presents itself to objective perception—that part we have in common with everything else in visible creation. So obvious are its color and dimension, its sounds, smells and actions, that some would deny

that there is anything of Man beyond what is physical, beyond what is manifested in the material world. For, when studying the human body, we can be left in awe of its wisdom-filled design and execution. When considering the upper thigh bone, the heart, the eye, inner ear or brain, we not only gain an appreciation for the level of perfection the human body has achieved during its long evolution, but we might also be convinced that in its complexity and mystery also lie the source of those unquantifiable qualities that raise us, at our best, to be individuals who are capable of moral action and selfless love. But morality and love do not spring from the physical.

When we observe a human being, we have before us not just the physical body, but a combination of the physical with higher faculties. And, even though our body has a brain that reflects thoughts, and a nervous system that conveys sensations, in and of itself what is purely of a physical nature can neither think nor feel. We recognize that a piece of rock crystal is physical, but in its very nature, it is something quite different from the human brain, eye or heart. The rock crystal is inert. But these organs, part of Man's physical body, are intermixed with higher members. It is through such a system of relationships that something is brought about which is completely different from other aspects of the physical. To gain an insight into our physical nature, we need to take away from what appears before us everything that is not of a material nature. Eliminate all thoughts, sensations, feelings, mani-

festations of will—everything of the human being that is not quantifiable or measurable. There then would remain a very wisely ordered, extremely complicated automaton, a purely physical apparatus. This is Man's physical body.

Perhaps the best way of appreciating just what comprises our physical body—what we have in common with the material world around us—is to consider the phenomenon of death. For the corpse is an expression of the physical body without the interplay of these higher members. It is then easier to see that our physical body is of the same nature as the rest of the physical world. An investigation of the corpse will reveal the same mineral forces at work within it as within the rest of the world of matter and energy. For once life departs, the purely physical laws of nature hold sway, and the human form begins little by little to disappear. It becomes completely subject to the workings of the material world.

Thus death separates what is purely physical from those higher components of the human being that build up and animate the body; separates what is hidden from what is manifested in Man. And although one requires clairvoyant sight to see these hidden agents, one needs only sound observation and judgment to see their effects.

The Life Body

The phenomenon of death, therefore, introduces us to an invisible component of the human being that builds up and gives form to our physical nature. Because physical laws are adapted to the destruction

of life—to rendering the body to dust—during every moment of our life we must occupy ourselves with an inner battle against death. Plants, animals and men possess this vital element which elaborates the physical body and forestalls death. It is our life force, and it interpenetrates our physical body. What we see when we look at a plant is really its life body made visible through the agency of the physical, for by using building blocks from the material world, the life body constructs the physical body.

Although it can be referred to as the vital force, or the body of formative forces, in this book it will be designated the life body, in spite of the fact that it has nothing of a bodily nature in the physical sense. The life body, therefore, is not a more rarefied physical body, for it expresses the antithesis of what is of a material nature. In this context, the term 'body' simply indicates that the life body has a spatial dimension. But this spatial aspect does not exclude other bodies from occupying the same space.

One cannot grasp the nature of living things by means of the laws governing the outer world of sense, and we cannot perceive the life force through our ordinary senses. It is possible, however, through persistent meditative exercises, to unfold the organs necessary for higher perception. We perceive the colors and odors of living beings with our normal senses. But, with these organs of higher perception, we perceive life itself—perceive the formative forces that permeate and animate the physical body. For example, if one regularly spends time imagining the life cycle of the plant—how the seed germinates,

sprouts into stem and leaf, blossoms and bears fruit, to finally leave the seed behind as it dies—an insight into life processes will be achieved. Certain organs of supersensible perception will begin to open. Once this higher perception is developed, the supersensible researcher can start investigating the invisible aspects of the world around us with the same exactness and discipline as those researchers who are engaged in studying the physical nature of the universe.

The life body, or body of formative forces, is the vital second principle of Man. It maintains and enlivens the form and function of all the members of the physical body. And except for rare situations, such as happens during near-death experiences, the life body remains permanently united with the physical body from soon after conception until death. (It is possible to experience a partial separation of the life body from the physical when one of our limbs "goes to sleep" from pressure exerted upon it—when a small part of our life body is extruded from the physical body.)

The life body somewhat resembles the physical in certain respects. In its upper part, it takes on the form of the physical body, although it extends slightly beyond it. As it approaches the lower extremities, it becomes more cloudy and indistinct. But unlike the physical body, the life body is luminous and fluidic. Instead of distinct physical organs, there are flows of diverse colors¹ that are centered in

¹ Although the supersensible investigator does not see these colors in the physical sense, the psychic-spiritual impressions

the heart. The area around the heart is a veritable vortex of life forces and streaming ethereal currents. By these currents, life itself is maintained and regulated.

Even though all other living things have life bodies, the human being's life body is quite different from a plant's. Once a certain stage of development is completed, a part of our life body is set free—is set aside and reserved for a unique purpose. Though it may seem surprising, it is this free part of our life body that is the seat of our temperaments *and* our memory. Our life experiences and our conscious thoughts are impressed into the life body as memories. These memories are then held fast by the physical body. Because of this reserved part of our life body, a person can be educated, while a plant cannot.

Beyond enlivening and maintaining the physical body, the life body also contains the principle of repetition. The forces of growth, rhythm and reproduction are also within its nature. In spite of the fact that the materials that comprise a living being are continually changing, in spite of this continual renewal of its elements, an organism remains constant during life, and its form is transmitted to its descendants. In fixing the form of living beings, the life body thereby also determines species.

From observation of the plant kingdom, we can conclude that left to itself, a life body would remain in a perpetual state of sleep. It would maintain the

received are similar in their effect as the impressions of physical colors.

physical body in a purely vegetative form of life. But in the animal kingdom and in Man, there is something that rouses us again and again from this unconscious state into one illumined with the light of consciousness.

The Sentient Body

Just as that which gives life and form to our physical nature cannot be perceived with bodily senses, so too the process of perception, or the experience of pain can only be directly studied by a still higher order of clairvoyant perception. (The direct perception of these higher principles is popularly called seeing someone's aura.)

In much the same way that we drew on the phenomenon of death to seek evidence of the life force within Man, we can utilize the phenomenon of dreamless sleep to lead us to the next higher principle of human nature, that which bestows upon us our conscious capacities. For within the deeply sleeping individual, action and conscious perception, pain and pleasure, have all faded away. This is why the surgeon will anesthetize a patient, have him "put to sleep", before beginning a painful procedure.

As the corpse evinces the withdrawal of a person's life body, the dreamless sleeping figure provides us with a view of the human being lacking the activity of this third principle. In the same way that our life body animates and gives form to our physical nature, another hidden element, designated the sentient body, irradiates Man and the animals with the light of consciousness. It provides the faculty to

bring the outer objective world into inner subjective experience. This lighting up of consciousness, however, has a destructive consequence.

As long as the sentient body is joined to the physical and life bodies it can feel pleasure and pain, experience all the bounty of the senses. But this very activity brings about a fatigue—debilitates both the physical body and the life body. It is necessary to our very *life* that the sentient body expels the fatigue it produces. And it does just that when it withdraws from the physical and life bodies during sleep, allowing them to be renewed during its absence. During this 'outbreathing' at night, the sentient body is in a world of its own nature, of universal harmony from which it draws nourishment and strength, bringing back freshly invigorated forces to the waking individual.

But, as wondrous as this revitalizing activity is, there remains much that is imperfect. Incorporated during a later phase of our evolution, the sentient body has not yet achieved the same level of perfection as our physical and life principles. And, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, it has been infused with forces that run counter to the normal progress of evolution. It is because of this imperfection that it is able to destroy the harmony inherent within the physical body—to bring about sickness and disease. But even though it has had a shorter term of evolution, in one sense the sentient body is that part of the human being that is closest to the self. What the human being experiences in differentiating between well-being and misfortune, happiness and sorrow,

emanates from the sentient body.

Interestingly, unlike the life body which takes on the opposite sex of the physical body (i.e. the life body of a female is masculine), the sentient or soul body has both masculine and feminine aspects. It therefore is genderless. And the sentient body does not assume the form of the physical body as the life body does. It is egg-shaped—an ovoid that extends beyond the physical body like a cloud. The upper part of the sentient body is luminous and, since each passion has its corresponding 'astral' color, it can take on all the colors of the rainbow according to what passions animate it. For example, green is indicative of compassion for one's fellow man, while a brownish-red reflects an affinity toward the lower passions. The clear conception of a logical thinker would be seen as a sharply defined yellowish figure, while a muddled thought has vague outlines. Within the sentient body are outlined a great number of different figures, complex variations of lines and rays—many like flashes of lightning, others in curious twists. In the average person, the lower part lacks a certain order and regularity, and is still chaotic and dark.

Although the life body constructs the physical, it is the sentient body that provides the guidance and stimulation, the archetypal patterns used by the life body in building up the physical form. Being the most volatile form of 'body', the sentient body is nonetheless still involved in the laws of heredity. In it is expressed what is felt to be the external, personal peculiarity of an individual. Hence, inclina-

tions, passions, etc. can pass from forefathers to children.

The "I Am" - The Ego²

There is that magic moment in the two-year-old's life when the dawning of self-awareness transforms her "Mary wants a cookie", to "I want a cookie." For the first time, through an inner conscious activity, she has perceived herself as separate from the rest of the world—is first given a glimpse of the primordial essence of her own spirit. This perception of the self comes about by our relating inner experiences to things and events of the outer world—by comparing present experiences with those of the past. By preserving the past in memory, the 'I' holds consciousness together. It is only when the child begins to utter 'I' that the contents of her soul life become knit together in a conscious unity. Of course her Ego existed before this conscious revelation occurred, for it had been the actor in the infant's learning to walk, to speak and think.

In the infant, the continual colliding of the self with the external world brings about the dawning of self-consciousness. As for ourselves, upon awaking each morning, our 'I' reencounters the resistance of our physical body. This experience is what reawakens the consciousness of our 'I'. Throughout our working day we do not really possess our 'I', but

² The word Ego is used throughout in its original Greek sense to imply the spiritual essence of Man. The word Ego is an allusion to something which has only its image in the physical world, but does not itself exist here.

rather we perceive it being reflected back from our physical body. Thus what we normally know as self-consciousness is a reflection, a mirror image of our Ego. We can observe how this reflection ceases when we go to sleep, that this reflection of the 'I' is no longer perceived. Yet in the morning when we awake, it enters our consciousness again.

Along with the dimming of consciousness, sleep also involves a dimming of our will. We do not exert our will during sleep. But what is expressed in the word 'I' is a true act of will. This mental picture we have of our 'I' is a reflection that arises when our will impinges on our body. Thus we see our own 'I' as an expression of will through its effect on the body. This gives us our mental image of the 'I'. On the physical plane, the 'I' lives as an act of will.

Through self-consciousness, Man describes himself as an independent being, separate from all others. This revelation of the 'I' within justifies us in regarding our Ego as our true being. Even though in one sense, our thoughts and feelings and actions can be interpreted as the 'self', in another real sense our body and soul are only the carriers of the true essence of our being. They are the vehicles that allow us to perceive the effects of the 'I',—the imperishable spirit that is Man himself.

To supersensible perception, the manifestation of the Ego could be sketched as an ensemble of rays being focused to a point lying less than one-half inch behind the forehead. Slightly above the root of the nose, lying motionless like a tiny blue egg within the mobile sentient body, sits an empty space that is the

center of our Ego. From it radiate forces through which the human being gains control over the sentient body. And the more the Ego is lord over body and soul, the more definitely organized, the more varied and richly colored the aura becomes.

The Sentient, Intellectual and Spiritual Souls

As our bodily nature is comprised of three principles: its physical or material component, its vital life element, and its sentient or conscious attribute; Man is also endowed with three 'soul' components—components that enable us to think, feel, and act with conscious volition.

If we observe someone raising her hand, we can consider the action from two different perspectives. We can examine the physical mechanism of the arm to describe the nerve and muscle processes taking place, or we can consider the inner motive, the soul process that initiates the movement. The supersensible researcher can see these soul processes behind *all* physical events.

As described earlier, our sentient body awakens us to the outer world by conveying to our inner being what our senses perceive as odors and colors, heat and cold, pleasure and pain. But it is with the first of our soul attributes, the sentient soul, that we respond to these stimuli, and experience attraction or repulsion, joy or sorrow, courage or fear. Our sentient soul, which forms a unity with our sentient body, houses our world of feelings and emotions. Passion, joy, courage and duty are all bound up with

it. When we speak of joy and sorrow, desires, wishes, etc. one is speaking of the sentient soul. It is the seat of desires, impulses, emotions and passions.

But we are more than sentient beings with emotions and passions—we also think.

It is with thinking that we transcend the immediate experience of sensations, impulses, instincts and passions. Unlike the animal kingdom, we incorporate in our nature a system of rational laws. The mere sentient soul is therefore different and distinct from this higher member, the intellectual or rational soul, which brings thinking into its service—which inwardly experiences the harmony in its universe. Nature subjects man to its laws, but Man subjects himself to the laws of thought. Unlike my feelings, which are always self-referential, my thoughts can be universal, for thoughts need have no reference to the self. Knowledge has significance independent of feelings, and truth carries its value in itself.

And, as it is with the true, so it is with the truly good.

Moral goodness is independent of inclinations, passions *and* knowledge. By causing the self-existent true and good to come to life in our inner being, we develop within ourselves a still higher soul, one in which a moral world awakens—in which the eternal spirit shines. A light is kindled in it that is imperishable. And, in so far as the soul lives in this light is it a participant in the eternal. That, which shines forth in our being as eternal, which conveys to us the moral order of the universe, is the spiritual soul.