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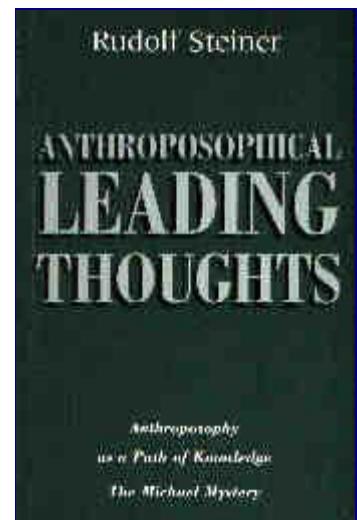
A READER'S JOURNAL

Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts, GA# 26
by
Rudolf Steiner

Anthroposophy as a Path of Knowledge
The Michael Mystery

Translated by George and Mary Adams

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A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2002



This volume contains 185 brief paragraph-long summaries written by Rudolf Steiner for members of the Anthroposophical Society. Compiled in this book readers can find a comprehensive compendium of Steiner's thoughts and insights into the spiritual world written by his own hand. This is a valuable reference book for those already familiar with his works and an indispensable introduction to the corpus of his writings to those who come new to Steiner. All that said, it makes the task before me a daunting one. How can one summarize a summary? Review a review? Condense a list? If I were to deeply ponder those questions, I might never undertake the task before me, so without further ado, I simply begin. Each "leading thought" is numbered from 1 to 185 and those from which I have excerpted quotes will have the number of the "thought" listed at the front of the passage cited. The presence of an ellipsis will indicate an excerpt from the "thought."

[page 13] 1. Anthroposophy is a path of knowledge, to guide the Spiritual in the human being to the Spiritual in the universe. It arises in man as a need of the heart, of the life of feeling; and it can be justified only inasmuch as it can satisfy this inner need. He alone can acknowledge Anthroposophy, who finds in it what he himself in his own inner life feels impelled to seek. Hence only they can be anthroposophists who feel certain questions on the nature of man and the universe as an elemental need of life, just as one feels hunger and thirst.

I have certainly felt the hunger and thirst for answers to the questions for which Steiner lays out answers in his spiritual science or *anthroposophy*. And I have felt that the long and awkward name itself, which parses into *anthro* (man) and *sophy* (knowledge), is by far the best name possible to describe the full knowledge of the material *and* spiritual composition of man, the human being, in body, soul, and spirit. It is a path of knowledge that one avoids at one's own peril; for having avoided it while in the flesh, one will have no access to it while out of the flesh.

To seek for such answers only in the material world will lead one to a limit "where the life of the soul in man would die if it could go no farther."

[page 13] 2. ... Everyday life and science do not lead to this limit in such a way as to compel man to stop short at it. For at the very frontier where the knowledge derived from sense-perception ceases, there is opened through the human soul itself the further outlook into the spiritual world.

It may seem strange to the 21st Century ear to hear that science stops short in its seeking for knowledge, as that seems to be anathema to what the word *scientist* means to most people; namely, someone who seeks, without stopping or failing, to discover truths about the world we live in. And yet that is precisely what the majority of scientists do, i.e., stop short, and they will proclaim it loudly and defend it forcefully if asked. Their proclamations take the form of such

statements as "I deal with reality, not with illusions," "I deal only with the evidence of my senses," or "I have found no spirit or soul with my measuring instruments." In a world which, rightly understood, evolved out of the non-sensory, they require that *their* science deal only with the evolved products, and not with the raw material, the *spiritual world*, out of which these end products were formed. It is as if a plastics manufacturer claimed to be able only to make products out of Leggo blocks because that was the only plastic raw material that it was familiar with. It is a crude metaphor, but it strikes at the core error of the materialistic scientist: mistaking the end product for a raw material. Materialistic scientists operate exactly this way when they disdain any possibility that the end product, a *materiality* that is only perceptible to our senses, actually proceeds from the realm of the non-material, a *spiritual reality*. Steiner was able to perceive the spiritual reality that underlay the material reality and to give others instructions in how they might perceive the supersensible spiritual reality.

[page 14] 3. There are those who believe that with the limits of knowledge derived from sense-perception the limits of all insight are given. Yet if they would carefully observe *how* they become conscious of these limits, they would find in the very consciousness of the limits the faculties to transcend them. The fish swims up to the limits of the water; it must return because it lacks the physical organs to live outside this element. Man reaches the limits of knowledge attainable by sense-perception; but he can recognise that on the way to this point powers of soul have arisen in him — powers whereby the soul can live in an element that goes beyond the horizon of the senses.

Rightly understood, only man can hold together the forces of man; Nature is incapable of doing so as it proves every time a human being dies. No force of Nature can continue to hold together a human body that is bereft of the human soul and spirit that have vacated it upon death.

[page 14] 4. ... His own being holds together the materials and forces of the natural world in the living and sensitive form of man until the moment when he passes through the gate of death. Then Nature receives this human form, and Nature cannot hold it together; she can but dissolve and disperse it.

Man is soul and spirit placed into this world which contains lifeless things and as such he must carry himself on Earth in a physical body which gathers minerals into itself, but he also has an essential etheric nature.

[page 16] 7. ... Inasmuch as he unfolds within him the forces which the living world draws into this earthly sphere from cosmic space, he has an etheric or life-body. The trend of science in modern times has taken no account of this essential contrast of the earthly and the ethereal. For this very reason, science has given birth to the most impossible conceptions of the ether. For fear of losing their way in fanciful and nebulous ideas, scientist have refrained from dwelling on the real contrast. But unless we do so, we can attain no true insight into the Universe and Man.

With only a physical and etheric body on Earth, we would remain unconscious, which is the condition of *sleep* - the name we give to the condition we are in when the astral and Ego bodies vacate the physical and etheric bodies.

[page 16] 8. ... Following up this line of thought, we recognise that something is at work in man — and in the animal — which is *not* of the same nature as the physical and the etheric. It takes effect, not when the forces of the physical and the etheric are active in their own way, but when they cease to be thus active. In this way we arrive at the conception of the astral body.

To recognize the reality of the astral body requires us to strengthen our soul by stimulating our thinking from within, a process which will develop within us a new organ of perception that will light up the astral body for us.

[page 17] 9. ... Through the strength of soul thus engendered, we become aware that there are inner organs of perception, which see a spiritual reality working in the animal and man at the very point where the physical and etheric body are held in check in order that consciousness may arise.

Thus, modern materialistic scientists use the very tool that arises from their possession of an astral body to proclaim that no such thing exists! With only a physical body and life-body, which no one can deny exists, consciousness

cannot arise.

[page 17] 10. ... On the contrary, these two bodies, with their activities, must be reduced to zero — nay, even below zero — to 'make room' for the working of consciousness. They do not generate consciousness, they only furnish the ground on which the Spirit must stand in order to bring forth consciousness within earthly life.

Man, the human being, lives in the balance between the material world and spiritual world. In this next leading thought Steiner graphically describes this balance.

[page 20] 17. Man is a being who unfolds his life in the midst, between two regions of the world. With his bodily development he is a member of a 'lower world'; with his soul-nature he himself constitutes a 'middle world'; and with his faculties of Spirit he is ever striving towards an 'upper world.' He owes his bodily development to all that Nature has given him; he bears the being of his soul within him as his own portion; and he discovers in himself the forces of the Spirit, as the gifts that lead him out beyond himself to participate in a Divine World.

And yet Spirit is not absent in the material world; it only appears to be absent because the blinders of materialized science have shuttered our eyes to the presence of the Spirit in the material world, up until now.

[page 20] 18. The Spirit is creative in these three regions of the World. Nature is not void of Spirit. We lose even Nature from our knowledge if we do not become aware of the Spirit within her. Nevertheless, in Nature's existence we find the Spirit as it were asleep. Yet just as sleep has its task in human life-- as the 'I' must be asleep at one time in order to be the more awake at another — so must the World-Spirit be asleep where Nature is, in order to be the more awake elsewhere.

Surely if modern science were careful in its observation, would it not observe the Spirit at work? Yes, that would be the result if science were not certain that "a universal causality is dominant in all phenomena of the world" including man himself and that anyone who thinks the contrary is delusional.

[page 21] 20. ... Modern Natural Science wishes to follow observation and experience faithfully in all things, but in its prejudice about the hidden causality of man's inner sources of action it sins against its own principle. For the free and active working, straight from their inner resources of the human being, is a perfectly elementary experience of self-observation. It cannot be argued away; rather must we harmonise it with our insight into the universal causation of things within the order of Nature.

We must begin our observation of the Spirit, Steiner avers, with "self-observation." This clashes with the very basis of materialistic science which insists on "objectivity" of observation without personal bias. In the observation of one's self, however, objectivity *requires* personal bias which is simply another name for observation of one's self directly. To observe one's self without bias is to *not* observe at all.

[page 22] 22. ... As the human body pines away when bereft of physical nourishment, so will the man who rightly observes himself feel that his Self is becoming stunted if he does not see working into it the forces from a creative spiritual World outside him.

Everyone goes through life on Earth with a personal bias, and when the time comes to leave the material plane all the events of one's life, all one's biases, are played back to one as if in a large diorama where time is spread out in space before one. The events of one's life, one's leaning of the mind, one's predisposition towards certain relationships and activities, are the end results of karmic balancing plans from one's previous lifetime. This replay of one's immediate lifetime is a like a final Balance Sheet for a business before its dissolution. One's experience of this "balance sheet" will confirm that it was made possible by the images stored in one's etheric body over one's just completed lifetime.

[page 22] 23. Passing through the gate of death, man goes out into the spiritual world, in that he feels falling away from him all the impressions and contents of soul which he received during earthly

life through the bodily senses and the brain. His consciousness then has before it in an all-embracing picture-tableau the whole content of life which, during his earthly wanderings, entered as pictureless thoughts into his memory, or which — remaining unnoticed by the earthly consciousness — nevertheless made a subconscious impress on his soul. After a very few days these pictures grow faint and fade away. When they have altogether vanished, he knows that he has laid aside his etheric body too; for in the etheric body he can recognize the bearer of these pictures.

The "few days" referred to above, as we learn from Steiner, is the longest time that one has stayed awake without sleeping during one's lifetime. The next stage involves the dissolution of the astral body, and its passage involves the amount of time one spent asleep during one's lifetime, about one-third of one's life. The next leading thought explains why this is so.

[page 23] 24. Having laid aside the etheric body, man has the astral body and the Ego as the members of his being still remaining to him. The astral body, so long as it is with him, brings to his consciousness all that during earthly life was the unconscious content of the soul when at rest in sleep. This content includes the judgments instilled into the astral body by Spirit-beings of a higher World during the periods of sleep — judgments which remain concealed from earthly consciousness. Man now lives through his earthly life a second time, yet so, that the content of his soul is now the judgment of his thought and action from the standpoint of the Spirit-world. He lives it through in backward order: first the last night, then the last but one, and so on.

The next phase begins at the completion of the judgment stage above and involves the entering of the spiritual world. During this phase one enters a relationship with spiritual beings similar to one's relationship with the beings of nature during one's life on Earth.

[page 23] In spiritual experience, everything that was his outer world on Earth now becomes his inner world. He no longer merely perceives it, but experiences it in its spiritual being which was hid from him on Earth, as his own world.

In many places in Steiner lectures and books, one finds reference to these three kinds of knowledge: Imagination, Inspiration, and Intuition. They are usually capitalized in order to point to their special reference to a form of knowledge and distinguish them from their common nouns. The next three leading thoughts provide a succinct summary of these important forms of knowledge. See also leading thoughts 53, 54, and 55 for further elaboration on how the three phases of life between death and a new birth goes through these three phases.

[page 24] 29. In the evolved Imaginative Knowledge, there works what lives as soul and spirit in the inner life of man, fashioning the physical body in its life, and unfolding man's existence in the physical world on this bodily foundation. Over against the physical body, whose substances are renewed again and again in the process of metabolism, we here come to the inner nature of man, unfolding itself continuously from birth (or conception) until death. Over against the physical Space-body, we come to a Time-body.

[page 24] 30. In the Inspired Knowledge there lives, in picture-form, what man experiences in a spiritual environment in the time between death and a new birth. What Man is in his own Being and in relation to cosmic worlds — without the physical and etheric bodies by means of which he undergoes his earthly life — is here made visible.

[page 24, 25] 31. In the Intuitive Knowledge there comes to consciousness the working-over of former earthly lives into the present. In the further course of evolution these former lives have been divested of their erstwhile connections with the physical world. They have become the purely spiritual kernel of man's being, and, as such, are working in this present life. In this way, they too are an object of Knowledge — of that Knowledge which results with the further unfolding of the Imaginative and Inspired.

In Goethe's work on the metamorphosis of plants, his idea of the *Urplant* or Archetypal Plant is essential to

understanding his inspirational work. One can best understand the Urplant if one imagines a time-lapse film of an annual plant during the course of a year, from seed to death. It sprouts, its roots grow down into the soil, and its leaves grow above the soil. Upper leaves change color and form flowers and the structure of the flowers form reproductive organs that are pollinated and form fertilized seeds which fall to ground after which the original plant dies. No one still picture of the plant will suffice to describe it, only the combined growing image of the plant from inception to death will do the job. That is the Archetypal or Urplant of Goethe. In this next passage we can see that this Urplant is an example of Inspiration or Inspired Knowledge.

[page 29] The activity which the soul discharges in conscious devotion to what is brought before it as the finished picture, may be styled *Imagination*. On the other hand *Inspiration* is the experience that must be unfolded in order to comprehend a growing picture.

The three leading thoughts 32, 33, and 34 deal with the three divisions of the human being in earthly form: head, limb-metabolism, and rhythmic organization. The head's physical and etheric bodies exist alongside but separate from the astral and Ego bodies. On the other hand in the limb-metabolic system the astral and Ego bodies live within the physical and etheric bodies promoting their movement and growth. For this reason the limb-metabolic system strives to become part of the head of man, and, while it is prevented from doing so during a single earthly life, it is incorporated gradually into the head of man over successive lifetimes ([1](#)).

Here we have the two extremes of the human body: the head on one end and the limbs on the other end. How are these two extremities coordinated? By the mediating system that Steiner calls the *rhythmic system*. Here is leading thought 34 to explain how the rhythmic system coordinates the head and the limb-metabolic system.

[page 25] 34. The rhythmic organisation stands in the midst. Here the Ego-organization and astral body alternately unite with the physical and etheric part, and loose themselves again. The breathing and the circulation of the blood are the physical impress of this alternate union and loosening. The in-breathing process portrays the union; the outbreathing the loosening. The processes in the arterial blood represent the union; those in the venous blood the loosening.

In leading thoughts 36 and 37, Steiner tells us that in the form of the head, we can see the results of Imagination coagulated to the point of physical density; in the rhythmic, we can see the results of Inspiration; and in the limb-metabolism, we can see the operation of pure supersensible Intuition. [paraphrased from page 26]

We may judge an artist's paintings objectively, even examining how the colors were applied, the chemical composition of the oil paints, or their power of adhering to the canvas, but such materialistic forms of observation and inspection fail us dramatically when we apply them to the human being. Nevertheless modern science boldly attempts such analysis of the human being and proffers it as scientific theory. Steiner was preeminent among scientists in pointing out this fallacy which has continued unabated to this day. Scientists of many disciplines have ignored his caveat at their own peril. Here are his words written some seventy-five years ago about the folly of the ideas used by modern scientists:

[page 27] Through them men have grown accustomed to thinking out natural laws, and to explaining by means of them the phenomena which are perceived by the senses. They then turn their attention to the human organism and think that that too can be explained through bringing the laws of Nature to bear upon it.

Now this just as though, in considering a picture which a painter had created, we only took into account the substance of the colours, their power of adhering to the canvas, the way in which these colours were applied, and similar things. But such a way of regarding the picture does not reveal what is contained in it. Quite other laws are active in the revelation contained in the picture than those which can be perceived by considering such points above.

In the next leading thought, Steiner explains something in summary that he explains fully in his eight volumes of

lectures compiled in the series known as Karmic Relationships (2): that history today is a deadening process of listing who killed whom, who ruled where and when, etc. He shows how what constitutes "history" today can only be enlivened by careful attention to what the personages of history carry with them as meanings in their souls as they pass from one life to the next.

[page 33, 34] 50. It is important to point out, how the study of historic life of mankind is called to life when we show that it is the souls of men themselves, passing from epoch to epoch in their repeated lives on Earth, who carry over the results of one historic age to another.

In Jane Roberts' works I first encountered the thought expressed in leading thought 59 below. She asked the question, "Where is the tree from which fall the thoughts that appear in mind's basket?" The "tree of thinking" Steiner identifies for us as the Beings of the Third Hierarchy of Angels, Archangels, and Archai(3). In leading thoughts 60 and 61 he goes on to describe that Feeling is identified with the Second Hierarchy and Will with the First Hierarchy. Later on in leading thought 66, he points out what would happen if man did not accept the fruit which drops into "mind's basket": "man could not attain to Freedom."

[page 36] 59. Open-minded contemplation of Thinking shows that the thoughts of the ordinary consciousness have no existence of their own, but arise only as the reflected images of something. Man, however, feels himself to be alive in his thoughts. The thoughts are not alive, but he himself is living in them. This life has its source in Spirit-beings, whom we may describe (in the sense of my book, *Occult Science*) as the Beings of the Third Hierarchy — a kingdom of the Spirit.

The next leading thought should be sobering to those scientists who are so focused on the world of their senses that they are unable to see below the surface of things:

[page 40] 62. In our sense-perceptions, the world of the senses bears on to the surface only a portion of the being that lies concealed in the depths of its waves beneath. Penetrative spiritual observation reveals within these depths the after-effects of what was done by souls of men in ages long gone by.

Some will say that meditation is required to acquire knowledge of the spiritual world. Steiner says that meditation alone will not do the job, it requires thinking also, a thinking that lives on in one's feeling.

[page 49] It should not be thought that one hears the contents of the lectures and that the knowledge of the spiritual world is acquired separately by means of meditation. In that way one will never make real progress. Both must act together in the soul. And to think out anthroposophical ideas and allow them to live on in the feelings is also an exercise of the soul. A person grows into the spiritual world with open eyes if he uses Anthroposophy in the manner we have described.

Let me tell you a story. My friend Perryl's older sister Enid died recently. At the end of the funeral mass at Holy Family Church, Perryl got up to say a few words about his beloved sister. After acknowledging how much he loved Enid and what a fine sister she was, he told a story about a time when he was only a year or two old when Enid bit him on his arm. He didn't remember the event, being so young, but his mother told him about it enough times that he had no doubt that the bite happened. Interestingly, it was Enid who, when their mother came to investigate why little Perryl was crying, said boldly, "I bit him!"

Why did young Enid confess so proudly to biting Perryl and why some 75 years or so later did Perryl tell this story in his eulogy to Enid? The reason he gave in closing his eulogy was that he was sure now that the bite Enid gave him was a "love bite." It was a touching story, and something about it struck me as having karmic implications.

Suppose Perryl in a previous lifetime had done something to Enid that harmed her, and upon seeing her young brother Perryl and recognizing him as possessing the Spirit of the person who inflicted that harm upon her in a previous lifetime, Enid chose to bite him? If she had not taken credit for the bite, her mother and therefore Perryl would have never known of the event. So she ensured that Perryl would know. Perryl, while arranging his thoughts for Enid's eulogy, received an Inspiration and Intuition to recall this long ago event and used it to praise his sister at her funeral.

These are how karmic events are balanced between lifetimes, whether or not this was true for Perryl and Enid. Consciously in the course of normal thought processes, one forgets one's karma, but in times requiring deep thought, something breaks through via Inspiration and Intuition that illuminates one's karma.

[page 64] 96. When Inspiration and Intuition enter the Imagination, then, beside the impulses of the present, the outcome of former earthly lives becomes perceptible in the working of the Will. The past life is revealed, working itself out in the present.

Most people today do not look up to a world of spiritual beings, up until now. This was not the case much earlier in time and will cease to be the case in the foreseeable future. If people acted that way earlier in time, how might we find evidence of that?

[page 67] Everywhere amongst the peoples of antiquity one finds the consciousness that looked up to a world of spiritual beings. The historical remains of this are described to-day as a consciousness that expressed itself in myths and mythologies, which are not considered of much importance for an understanding of the real world. And yet with this consciousness man stands in his own world — in the world of his true origin — whereas with his present consciousness he is lifted out of his own world. Man is a spirit; and his world is the world of spiritual beings.

And yet without a forgetting of the presence of the spiritual beings, humans would have been unable to achieve freedom. The thoughts that fell into "mind's basket" had to impress on the physical body first. Along with the imprinting on the physical body came the condition that only thoughts involving the material world would be accepted. "This condition came with the fifteenth century A.D." Historically this is the time when modern science began with Sir Francis Bacon's pioneering work.

[page 69] Thoughts such as these can make *only* what is physical and material into the object of their knowledge, for they themselves are *only real* in the physical and material body of man. Materialism did not originate because material beings and processes alone can be perceived in external Nature, but because man had to pass through a stage in his development which led him to a consciousness at first only capable of seeing material manifestations. The one-sided development of this necessity in human evolution resulted in the modern view of Nature.

How did this process of evolution of consciousness proceed? In this next leading thought Steiner lays out for us the scope of this important progression of human consciousness over time.

[page 69] 103. In the evolution of mankind consciousness descends on the ladder of unfolding Thought. There was an earliest stage in consciousness when man experienced the Thoughts in the Ego — experienced them as real Beings, imbued with Spirit, soul, and life. At a second stage he experienced the Thoughts in the astral body; henceforth they appeared only as the images of Spirit-beings — images, however, still imbued with soul and life. At a third stage he experienced the Thoughts in the etheric body; here they manifest only an inner stirring, like an echo of the quality of the soul. At the fourth, which is the present stage, man experiences the Thoughts in the physical body, where they appear as the dead shadows of the Spiritual.

How can such a progression be at all helpful to human beings? Inquiring minds want to know, and the answer Steiner gives in one word: *freedom*.

[page 70] 104. In like measure as the quality of Spirit, soul and life in human Thought recedes, man's own Will comes to life. True freedom becomes possible.

A few weeks ago while visiting a section of this state one might call the Bible Belt because of its passionately religious attitudes, my eyes caught a strange sign in the front of a gasoline service station and convenience store: Du B Weiser I puzzled over this and realized that it was an anagram of the name of a popular beer, BUDWEISER. Someone was giving the message "Do Be Wiser" to their kids to warn them about the evils of drinking. They had re-arranged the letters in the outdoor display sign for the convenience store. As I pondered this thought I was reminded how when

I was a teenager, we rebelled against the dictates of our parents, and drinking beer was one of our modes of rebellion. It was as though we had to enter a sphere (drunkenness) in which our parents were no longer connected with us (their voiced injunctions in our head were silenced) in order to find our pathway to freedom.

If you substitute the word "parents" in the passage below for the words "Divine-Spiritual Beings" you may see an important message for yourself as a human being who had to become separated from your spiritual "parents" in order to achieve freedom.

[page 73] But man could not develop free-will in any other way than by entering a sphere in which the Divine-Spiritual Beings connected with him from the very beginning were not alive.

Just as teens drinking beer illegally are thus unconsciously and dangerously unfolding their lives, so have human adults lived dangerously by unfolding their lives unconsciously in the dangerous sphere of Ahriman (materialistic science), up until now. Like teenagers need models for unaddicted behavior so they can unfold their lives in freedom, so also do human adults require such a model. And they may find it in the Archangel Michael (pronounced Mi-cha-el) who works with human beings of the present time, guiding them in freedom and light. As Steiner puts it succinctly on page 83, Michael "lives as a being permeated by God in a world that is no longer permeated by God."

[page 74] It is the duty of the investigator into the spiritual world to draw the attention of humanity to the spiritual guidance of human affairs. Michael does what he has to do in such a way that he does not thereby wield an influence over human beings; but they may follow him in freedom, in order with the Christ-power [i.e., Light] to find the way out of that sphere of Ahriman which they were obliged to enter.

We live on this earthly world in a precarious balance between the illusions of Lucifer and the mechanistic toys of Ahriman. We must find our way in freedom between these forces or fall off the path into the clutches of either Lucifer or Ahriman. Michael as the Christ at our side on Earth can be our guide between these two extremes. One can see these two extremes in the tracts of the historians on one hand and the predictions of the futurists on the other, and Michael can assist us to forge a life in the main pathway to freedom and light that leads between them.

[page 90] 115. Man goes on his way through the Cosmos in such manner that his looking back into past ages can be falsified by the impulses of Lucifer, and his thinking into the future deceived by the allurements of Ahriman(4).

Have you met someone who was fiercely proud of his freedom? To be fiercely proud is to have one's egoism attached to the object of pride. This is exactly an example when the delicate balance of the pathway between Lucifer and Ahriman is tilted towards Ahriman.

[page 99] When man seeks freedom without inclining towards egoism — when freedom becomes for him pure love for the action which is to be performed — then it is possible for him to approach Michael. But if he desires to act freely and at the same time develops egoism - if freedom becomes for him the proud feeling of manifesting himself in the action — then he is in danger of falling into Ahriman's sphere.

Lucifer and Ahriman are the two aspects of the Fallen Angel: the Devil and Satan. It is easy to remember which is which if you'll notice that the vowels i and e are in Lucifer and Devil and the two a's are in Ahriman and Satan. The distinction of these two separate Beings became blurred over time by religion and theology, but the usage in the Bible of Devil and Satan are mostly consistent with Lucifer and Ahriman. Lucifer is the high-flying Devil who induces humans to mimic Icarus: thus we take flight prematurely and, when the wax attaching the wings melts, we come crashing to Earth. Steiner says that "sin is a premature good" and in Lucifer and Ahriman one can see the deleterious results of humankind receiving a premature good. The original sin was the eating of the Tree of Knowledge prematurely in the Garden of Eden story. Lucifer's aim for us is freedom at all costs.

[page 147] In complete contrast with this, there lives, in the greedy desire of the Ahrimanic powers,

cold hatred against all that unfolds in freedom. Ahriman's efforts are directed towards making a cosmic machine out of that which he allows to stream forth from the Earth into universal space. His ideal is 'measure, number and weight' and nothing else than these. He was called into the Cosmos that serves the evolution of humanity, because 'measure, number and weight,' which is his sphere, had to be unfolded.

When one works through the evolution of humanity as Steiner lays it out, one comes to understand very clearly that we are the humans we are now because of the results of every age or epoch that existed before us. Within us today can be found traces of every age of humankind going back to the diffuse cloud of warmth that we call Old Saturn which filled the space into which the Sun and planets later evolved into separate bodies. In the time between death and a new birth, we live in the present, and also in the past as outlined below:

[page 151] Between death and a new birth, man is indeed in the present, but he is living also in all the time that he has undergone through repeated lives on Earth and lives between death and a new birth.

The macrocosm is more alive the farther one sees back into the past. When humans were brought forth on the Earth, the macrocosm began a slow process of death. A seed when observed with clairvoyant vision will appear to hold an excess of germinating force flowing out into the macrocosm. Likewise the entire Earth appears as a seed in the macrocosm to Steiner's vision, and in the passage below, he takes a swipe at the materialist scientists who would minimize Earth by calling it a "mere speck of dust."

[page 168, 169] It is thus the spirit-seeing consciousness beholds the essence of the earthly realm, which stands as a new, life-kindling element within the dead and dying macrocosm.

As when the old plant has died and fallen away, the new plant, however large, is formed again from the seed in space so insignificant and small — so while the old dead macrocosm falls asunder a new macrocosm is coming forth from this 'speck of dust,' the Earth.

What is past, present, and future? One can find no better definition than this.

[page 169] The past throwing its shadows, the future fraught with the germs of a new reality meet in the human being; and their meeting constitutes the human life of present time.

Why are we not conscious of these germinating forces of new life? To understand this one must come to terms with the fact that when we are conscious, we are living off of our own dying forces. When the forces of regeneration are at work within us, we are not conscious, we are asleep. Thus a scientist who strove to understand a human being would only find those things and forces that are dead or dying, while the "creative kindlers of its life" operate hidden from the sensory apparatus of the scientist. When we sleep our dreams light up and Thought itself becomes alive. Then when we later awake we are left with the mere shadow or corpse of the Thought that lived in our dreams [paraphrased from page 171, 172]

Thoughts, rightly understood, are like dead pictures of a living reality. Alfred O. Korzybski in his landmark book, *Science and Sanity*, called these thoughts "maps" and the living reality the "territory." He explained that the "map is not the territory," and showed humanity how to live free of the semantic reactions that otherwise came from confusing the map with the territory. Steiner extends Korzybski's work into the Cosmos.

[page 172, 173] It is the dead picture. But this dead picture proceeds from the work of the greatest painter -- from the very Cosmos. It is true that the life remains out of it. If it did not, the Ego of man could not unfold. Nevertheless, the full content of the Universe, in all its greatness, is contained within this picture.

So far as was possible at that time and in that context, I indicated this inner relation of Thought and World-reality in my 'Philosophy of Freedom.' It is in the passage of that book where I say that there

is indeed a bridge leading from the thinking Ego's depths to the depths of Nature's reality(5).

From the forces that fill the Cosmos comes the forces that form the human body when the human being descends to Earth. Steiner calls the human body "the greatest work-of-art of the Macrocosm." [page 174]

This is an Easter story. Around 1973 my wife and I visited my brother David and his wife in San Francisco. He was in the US Army and stationed at the Presidio. On Easter Sunday we went down to the beach and spent the day just out of sight of the Golden Gate Bridge on the side opposite from the city. We picnicked, we fished, and we walked along the beach. We found a large stone imbedded in the beach sand that appeared to be a huge piece of jade. We washed as much sand as possible from the jade and it was obviously too big to dig out. I managed to chip off a small piece and brought it to mineralogist a few days later. He identified it as 'jasper' or 'river jade' as he called it. As we left the beach, somebody remembered that it was Easter and we hadn't gone to church. It was dark and we drove around San Francisco till we found a Catholic church. It was St. Dominic's Church, not only named after St. Dominic, but it was the national headquarters of the Dominican Order in the United States. The cathedral was dark except for the nave where the only people were congregated. As we approached the nave, we were given lit candles in small star-shaped holders and invited to sit in the choir stalls on the altar. We sat actually slightly behind the altar where the priest in his hopsack robe celebrated the Mass. During Mass, a child, not more than three years old, crawled around the base of the altar as the priest said Mass. I'd never seen anything like this. The candles, being up on the altar during Mass, the child walking around at the base of the altar. The small group of folk singers had a violin, guitars, tambourines and sang during the Mass the most beautiful songs. I had tears in my eyes from the incredible beauty of this special Easter Mass that I was blessed to be a part of. After Mass we did a circle dance in the front of the altar. We had come to San Francisco and were leaving with our most prominent memory of the weekend: going to church.

This story rose up in me as I read this next passage of the function of jasper in the original Easter story:

[page 178] Thus, Spirit-beings built the bridge from the old World-content to the new.

Indications of this secret of human evolution do indeed exist. The sacred jasper cup of the Holy Grail which Christ made use of when He broke the bread and in which Joseph of Arimathea gathered the blood from the wound of Jesus -- which contained therefore the secret of Golgotha. . .

In the next passage Steiner makes clear the task of Anthroposophy. A brief description of the historical context of the various soul ages would be helpful. The Sentient Soul Age extended from the fourth to first millennium before Christ, the Intellectual Soul Age extended until about 1453 A. D., and the Consciousness Soul Age from then until the present. The present age is also called the Spiritual Soul Age. We are in the first third of this Age and one can still find everywhere the effects of the Intellectual Soul Age (with its focus on the intellect) and to a much lesser extent of the Sentient Soul Age (with its focus on direct sensory experience).

[page 180] 161. Anthroposophy cannot be a revival of the Gnosis. For the latter depended on the development of the Sentient Soul; while Anthroposophy must evolve out of the Spiritual Soul, in the light of Michael's activity, a new understanding of Christ and of the World. Gnosis was the way of Knowledge -- preserved from ancient time -- which, at the time when the Mystery of Golgotha took place, was best able to bring home the Mystery to human understanding.

Where are we going at this point in time? Steiner tells us to look for the answer by making the Festival of Michael a integral part of our lives and then we will have this experience: "*Filled with ideas, the soul experiences Spirit-Light, when sense-appearance only echoes in man like a memory.*"

[page 194, 195] 170. Man must find the strength to fill his world of Ideas with light and to experience it so, even when unsupported by the stupefying world of sense. In this experience of the world of Ideas -- independent and in their independence filled with light -- his sense of community with the Cosmos beyond the Earth will re-awaken. Hence will arise the true foundation for festivals of Michael.

When Archimedes discovered how to measure the density of the gold in the King's crown, he did it using his own

body. He entered his bath one night while working on a solution to the crown problem and noticed that the water rose in the tub equivalent to the volume that his body displaced as he entered his bath. The abstraction we now know as "density" proceeded from Archimedes discovery.

[page 217] In reality, nothing that man experiences is an abstraction. He only fails to perceive whence it is that an experience comes to him; and thus he turns ideas about realities into abstractions. He speaks of the laws of mechanics. He thinks he has abstracted them from the connections and relationships of Nature. But this is not the case. All that man experiences in his soul by way of purely mechanical laws, has been discovered inwardly through his relationship of orientation to the earthly world (in standing, walking, etc.).

How are we to confront this rampant epidemic of abstractions whose human basis is forgotten? The answer lies at the root of the theme of this book. This can be considered as the leading thought of all the Leading Thoughts in this book:

[page 218] In the age when there was not yet a technical industry independent of true Nature, man found the Spirit *within* his view of Nature. But the technical processes, emancipating themselves from Nature, caused him to stare more and more fixedly at the mechanical-material, which now became for him the really scientific realm. In this mechanical-material domain, all the Divine-Spiritual Being connected with the origin of human evolution, is completely absent. The purely Ahrimanic dominates this sphere.

In the Science of the Spirit, we now create another sphere in which there is no Ahrimanic element. It is just by receiving in Knowledge this spirituality to which the Ahrimanic powers have no access, that man is strengthened to confront Ahriman *within the world*.

----- *Footnotes* -----

Footnote 1. In my review of [The Riddle of Humanity](#) by Rudolf Steiner, I likened this to the progressive incorporation in the automobile dashboard of status indicators that were formerly located in the body of the automobile, such as "Oil Level" "Door Ajar" or "Low Tire Pressure".

[Return to text directly before Footnote 1.](#)

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**Footnote 2.** My reviews of these lectures may be found at: [Vol I](#), [Vol II](#), [Vol III](#), [Vol IV](#), [Vol V](#), [Vol VI](#), [Vol VII](#), and [Vol VIII](#).

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Footnote 3. [page 52] In old teachings the Power from whom the thoughts in things proceed was designated by the name *Michael*.

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**Footnote 4.** A haunting prediction of the future is presented dramatically in the 2001 movie *A. I. Artificial Intelligence*. One can see the end results of a fully Ahrimanic existence portrayed for Earth.

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Footnote 5. I believe this is the passage Steiner is referring to: "We erect this barrier between ourselves and the world as soon as consciousness first dawns in us. But we never cease to feel that, in spite of all, we belong to the world, that there is a connecting link between it and us, and that we are beings within, and not without, the universe.

"This feeling makes us strive to bridge over this antithesis, and in this bridging lies ultimately the whole spiritual striving of mankind. The history of our spiritual life is a continuing search for the unity between ourselves and the world. Religion, art and science follow, one and all, this aim. The religious believer seeks in the revelation which God grants him the solution to the universal riddle which his I, dissatisfied with the world of mere appearance, sets before him. The artist seeks to embody in his material the ideas that are in his I, in order to reconcile what lives in him with the world outside. He too feels dissatisfied with the world of mere appearance and seeks to mould into it that something more which his I, transcending it, contains. The thinker seeks the laws of phenomena, and strives to penetrate by thinking what he experiences by observing. Only when we have made the world-content into our thought-content do we again find the unity out of which we had separated ourselves."

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