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## A READER'S JOURNAL

A Way of Self-Knowledge, GA#16 and the  
Threshold of the Spiritual World, GA#17

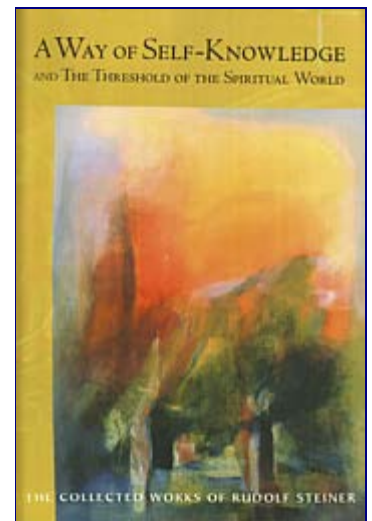
by  
Rudolf Steiner

Translated and Introduced by Christopher  
Bamford

ARJ2 Chapter: Spiritual Science

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A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2018



This is a new edition published in 2006 which includes two separate books, the second of which, [The Threshold of the Spiritual World](#), I read and reviewed [here](#).

The human being is a microcosm which contains within each of us the macrocosm of the cosmos in which we live and have our being. One studying Steiner's [Outline of Occult Science](#) can come to no other conclusion. While we are in our time between birth and death, we are inside of the cosmos, which is arrayed everywhere outside of us, but yet exists inside of us. In the next phase of human existence, our time between death and a new birth, the cosmos will be inside of us, we see it arrayed inside of us, and we will work to arrange it inside of us for our new body when we are born again on Earth. It was a goal of Rudolf Steiner to help each of us affirm the intimate connection of the spiritual in us with the spiritual in the cosmos.

[page vi] Christopher Bamford, *italics added*] Coming of age in the last third of the nineteenth century — and faced with the overwhelming evidence that materialism was not only a house built dangerously on sand but also potentially destructive of the entire divine-cosmic human experiment we call "Earth" — Steiner's primary concern from the beginning was to respond to the historical-spiritual call for a new epistemological path that, affirming the spiritual foundations of phenomenal reality, *united the spiritual in humanity with the spiritual in the cosmos*.

If you read books, you will have a tendency to emphasize content over method(1). If you are continually adding new apps to your Smartphone, but never running them, you are focusing on content over process in this computer age. Steiner was forced to communicate content to people in lectures and books, but he wished for people to concentrate on method, that is, on activating in their lives as *process* (method) the *content* he provided them. How one does that is explained in the Introduction.

[page vii] Christopher Bamford] Yet for [Steiner], method was always primary. It was method that gave contents their value and meaning. Contents were nothing unless realized — that is, embodied, enacted, and made *real* — by those who had heard him and read his works. More than that, viewed from a certain perspective one might say that, in the end, he was not concerned with contents *in any sense*, because what his lectures and books finally contained are not in fact contents at all, but reports of spiritual research in

**the form of injunctions or themes for *meditation*: meditate this and you will discover — experience — for yourself how this is the case.**

Thomas doubted Christ Jesus had resurrected, and was told to place his hands in the wounds He had suffered on the Cross. Only then did Thomas believe. Thomas had a process provided by Christ Jesus to go through to overcome his skepticism. Each of us have a process, a method, to go through to overcome our skepticism about the existence of the spiritual world. No amount of content will convince anyone of the existence of the spiritual world, just as no amount of talking to Thomas would have convinced him of Christ Jesus's resurrection. We all have an inborn ability to experience the physical world, but most lack an inborn ability to experience the spiritual world(2). Steiner recognized that he had a unique ability to perceive the spiritual world that most people of his time lacked.

**[page viii] Christopher Bamford] From his earliest years, Steiner experienced that the creative presence of the invisible, spiritual world was as real, universal, and certain as the reality of the so-called physical world revealed through the senses, which it permeated. Therefore, almost from the beginning (at least from about his ninth or tenth year), he dedicated himself to the task of providing a path whereby others could experience the certainty of spiritual reality — and all that followed from it — for themselves.**

Of what use is a path if one does not physically walk upon it? One can listen to someone talk who has walked on the path, but will garner no life lessons until one actually walks the path. That is what Steiner meant by method: *to walk the path*. In the following passage, the translator uses the word *process* as *content*. It would be better understood as "world content" because a *content* is some *thing* one can hold, but a *process* is a reality one *lives*, a reality one is present in.

**[page viii] Christopher Bamford] As he put it in [The Philosophy of Freedom](#): "In thinking we have hold of a corner of world process." But he adds, "We have to be present if anything is to occur." How, then, to be present in thinking?**

My preference would be to state, "In thinking we are on the pathway of the world. We have to actually begin walking if anything is to occur." From a very early age, Steiner was walking that pathway and he sought ways to communicate to others how to learn to do what he came upon naturally. But he found that giving others content on how to do it was not enough because they only learned to talk about the path. He needed a method, a *process*, for them to perform, which would affirm the existence of the otherwise invisible-to-the-senses(3) spiritual world. That pathway was through thinking.

**[page ix] Christopher Bamford] Continuing his philosophical and consciousness experiments, Steiner began to understand that the more he penetrated the experience of thinking, the more spiritual realities came to meet him.**

Can anyone learn to experience spiritual realities? The answer is "Yes, anyone who can think." Think of that! Steiner knew humankind had newly left the dark age of Kali Yuga and spiritual consciousness was dawning. His method became obvious to him.

**[page xi] Christopher Bamford] Contemplative cognitive transformation meditation became principal focus of his work on all fronts.**

My introduction to Rudolf Steiner came from an Occult Bookstore called Golden Leaves, run by Donna France who owned a local motel and would have study groups in her office at night. She would order books for her group and always ordered a few extra copies which ended up on shelves in her office. I met her in 1977 shortly before she moved into her first official bookstore on Phlox Street in Metairie. On one bottom shelf I found several skinny volumes by this German-speaking mystic and bought a copy. Each time I went back, I checked for new issues by Rudolf Steiner, bought one, and read it. Over the course of about 15 years, I had read about 10 of his books and found them interesting, but I was missing something.

In the mid-nineties when the Internet came on-line, my first question was, "Who is Rudolf Steiner and What books should I be reading?" Christopher Bamford has made it easy for me to share the answer I received to my what books question by listing the same four books that I was directed to by new friends on the Internet(4).

**[page xi, xii] Christopher Bamford] There is the sequence of books, which are wholly, or in part, explicitly concerned with inner development have become have become have become have become have become from Theosophy (CW9-1904), How to Know High Worlds (CW10 -1905), Stages of Higher Knowledge (CW12 - 1908), and An Outline of Occult Science (CW13 -1910).**

Steiner received a big shock when he encountered Theosophy, a completed body of knowledge that he had to penetrate to connect with the philosophical basis he was familiar with from direct experience. For example, he had already encountered a profound experience of the Christ, for which Theosophy had little use.

**[page xi, xii] Christopher Bamford] Entering Theosophy, he was faced with entire and, in a sense, finished traditions of inner work. These he had to penetrate, open, transform, and formalize in the light with the epistemological foundations he knew from experience to be necessary in order to create a "new" esoteric school.**

Here we see Steiner moving eventually from the arcane works of theosophical authors to a new more scientifically based *anthroposophy* or, called simply, *spiritual science*. With it came his focus on *method* or walking a path into the spiritual world.

**[page xii] Christopher Bamford] Thus, his framework which is to say, his language moved from philosophy to meditation. The process remained the same: the gradual liberation of consciousness from its conditioning to become a true, that is, *free organ for the cognition of spiritual realities*.**

What is the power of an unanswered question? This is a question that I have pondered and meditated upon for decades. We must condition ourselves to avoid accepting easy answers if we are to tap the power of a puzzling sentence or question which arises in our presence. Avoiding easy answers gives power to the unanswered question to work within us until an answer coalesces into an insight. For myself I hold an unanswered question meditating on it and then letting it slip into my unconscious, peacefully confident that an answer will arrive sometime later as an insight.

Steiner had his students do daily meditations, like he did himself, which placed some sentence or image into their consciousness.

**[page xiii] Christopher Bamford] For a regular, fixed period, they had to seek to permeate their whole organism with a deep reverence, inner peace, and silence. This was the first stage reverent, peaceful waiting gradually taking the place of the babble of inner and outer sensations in which one usually lives. Then some spiritual "idea" in the form of a sentence or image usually a paradoxical one in the sense that its logic or form could not be thought by the brain or experienced by the organically conditioned feelings was placed in the center of consciousness. The purpose was not to understand the idea (image or feeling), but to let it become alive within one in a special way.**

To close out his Introduction, Bamford provides us a concise description of the two books which comprise this volume, *A Way of Self Knowledge* and *The Threshold of the Spiritual World*.

He describes the first book, *A Way of Self Knowledge*, the one we are reviewing here, as "a meditation on death," and goes on to give a brief summary of its contents.

**[page xix] Christopher Bamford] Mindfulness of death is, in many ways, the prerequisite**

**for all spiritual work. The approach through thinking is especially interesting, for as Steiner puts it thinking allows "the event of death to arise in the soul in a way that is without desire or personal interest." At the same time, contemplating the autonomy of the physical body within nature allows one to forget oneself and experience one's body as part of the outer world. Such meditation prepares one to move always enhancing and metamorphosing thinking into the elemental or etheric world; and thence to encountering the Guardian of the Threshold. The meditations then lead one into the astral and "I" worlds, and conclude with two more general meditative exercises.**

The second book, *The Threshold of the Spiritual World*(5), picks up where the first book leaves off.

**[page xix] Christopher Bamford] It continues the process begun with *A Way of Self-Knowledge*, but in a freer, less systematic, more aphoristic form as "a few descriptions of spiritual experiences." Though Steiner speaks humbly and self-deprecatingly of this work, it is nevertheless a marvel of richness and insight. Little in size, short in chapters, known (as it were) in content, if read with the meditative, attentive care deserves, it is near infinite in depth and extent and striking in its wisdom and newness. Few works by Steiner give a clearer sense of his being as a Teacher. At the same time, it is an epitome of his teaching.**

In his Preface, entitled *Ways of Meditative Experience*, of the first book, Friedemann Schwarzkopf makes two important points worth emphasizing here.

First, he unifies *content* and *experience*,(6) saying "On a meditative level of consciousness, content and experience are *one* event." (Page xxiv) In other words, one must understand Goethe's *Ur-plant*, the archetypal or original plant, not as something added onto one's view of the plant but something unified with the plant, something ideal *and* real, something symbolic *and* yet identical with our experience of the plant. This is the essence of Steiner's meditative method.

**[page xxiv] Friedemann Schwarzkopf] One can apply here what Goethe said about the archetypal phenomenon, that it is simultaneously ideal, real, symbolic, and identical with our very specific experience. The phenomenon is like an "open secret," it utters itself. As Goethe said, "one should not search 'behind' the blueness of the sky," but understand and experience blue in the context in which it manifests.**

Second, Schwarzkopf uses a musical metaphor to describe the "I" living in spiritual experience.

**[page xxiv-xxv] Friedemann Schwarzkopf] When the "I" experiences the light of witnessing its own activity, it enters a *continuous movement of inner attunement*. Attunement to what? To the feeling-knowing that guides the how of its seeing, feeling, and inner doing.**

**When one describes this process in words, it takes hours, or pages; yet it happens as swiftly as an inner dialogue. It is as if we were tuning a violin, where we continuously compare the tones of the physical strings with our *feeling-knowing*. This tells us precisely whether the right "interval" has been reached.**

In Introductory Remarks, Steiner says he is presenting eight meditations, eight processes that people can perform for themselves and receive their deeper meanings directly into their souls.

**[page 3] I have tried to provide something of interest even to those readers who are already thoroughly familiar with writing and research in the area of the suprasensory(7). Practitioners of the suprasensory life may find something of value both in the mode of presentation and in the direct connection the material has with the soul's inner experiences. At the same time, I hope those less familiar with the material will also find this kind of meditative presentation useful.**



Below we review the eight meditations of Steiner. He presents us with each meditation as a step to answering this powerful unanswered question: *What does it mean to be a human being in the true sense of the word?*

## **MEDITATION 1. THE PHYSICAL BODY**

I remember pondering this question as a newly graduated physicist and hit this brick wall: How can the person I am, a physical human being, exist after death? I had stumbled upon the existential question posed by Hamlet: "To be, or not to be?" There seemed no answer to the conundrum that I had posed myself other than: "I exist now, but sometime later I will not exist." As I thought for many years on my question, I began to see human life as a puzzle with an enigma on each end. Life is a puzzle, but what happens before we are born, and what happens after we die? I had successfully sought answers to life's puzzle in the physical sciences, but nowhere could I find answers to life's two enigmas. The Church had an answer to the second enigma, the after-death condition, but their answer was unsatisfactory to me, positing some eternal living-with-angels condition. The Church denied me any answer to the first enigma, the pre-life condition, so how could I trust their kindergarten answer to the second enigma, the after-death condition?

Steiner asks us to ponder the answer to the puzzle of life, to help us understand why we live as a physical human body in the time between life and death.

**[page 6] *"Why do the matter and forces of the outer world form your body? It comes alive in order to give you an outer appearance. The outer world forms itself as you. You become aware that you need your body because, without your senses, which only your body can create, you could not initially experience anything. Without your body, you would be, as you were in the beginning, empty. The body gives you inner fullness, content."***

But, as a body, we would experience the horror of death if we contemplated our pure nothingness. Something is necessary for us to contemplate death without such thoughts in our soul. Steiner gives us a view of the future of our body over long periods of time, during which our body will continue to be subject to the laws of nature, but our inner experience of life will continue without the physical body(8).

**[page 7] *"This body is alive so that it can be an expression of my soul's experience. Its processes are such that my soul can live and experience itself within them. But that will not be so in the future. The things alive in my body now will be subject to quite different laws in the future. Then, my soul will experience them differently from the way in which I experience them now. Then, my body will be subject to the laws governing the matter and the forces in outer nature, laws that have nothing more to do with my life or me. This body, to which I now owe my soul's experiences, will then be taken into the general course of the world, where its behavior will no longer have anything in common with my inner experience."***

Reflecting in this way, we can experience inwardly all the horror of death, without intermingling purely personal feelings normally connected with such thoughts in the soul.

Steiner admits that some people believe the soul dies with the body and some people believe the soul lives continuously. Each side has a prejudice, the first a cool, disinterested detachment towards annihilation, the second a veiled, burning desire for continuation. "Still," he says, "the level of prejudice among the deniers of immortality is not less than it is among believers; it is only different." (Page 8) What his spiritual science offers us is the reality which replaces the two skewed beliefs.

**[page 11] To expect that progress in our understanding of nature will lead to our learning more about how physical laws apply to bodily processes as a mediator of soul**



**life is illusion. Although we will learn to understand more clearly what occurs in the body during life, the soul will always feel the processes in question to be outside it in the same way it feels the corresponding processes in the body after death to be foreign to it. For the soul, the body in the outer world must appear to be a collection of forces and substances existing autonomously and explainable as part of that outer world.**

The soul does not participate in the process of death, but remains separate from it. If a man is riding a horse and it dies, he gets off of the horse and finds a different horse to ride. A soul is in a similar position in regard to the physical body. It may feel a sense of loss at its demise, but the soul finds a way to ride on astride another physical body in the physical world in another time.

Steiner concludes this meditation by leading us to experience ourselves as a physical body

**[page 11, 12] Nature lets a plant arise, then dissolves it again. Nature holds sway, too, over the human body. It allows the human body to arise and pass away within its being.**

**Consider nature in this light and you can forget yourself and everything within you and feel your body as part of the outer world.**

**If you think in this way about your relationship to yourself and to nature, you will experience for yourself what can be called the physical body.**

The physical body is part of what we are as a full human being, but it is not all that we are.

## **MEDITATION 2. THE ETHERIC BODY**

We can observe what happens to the physical body after death, but we have no comparable inner experience of what happens to us after death. If we are unable to create that experience, we will experience death as an empty nothingness. Our body was here and we had inner experiences when it was here and now it's gone and we experience nothing.

But we know that if we hold one inner experience before us long enough, we can continue to experience it inwardly even though it has gone from our external experience. I am reminded of a curious experience I had after a long day of mining crystals. I spent six or seven hours crawling over the tailings left from a crystal mine. The dirt was hauled up to ground level and dumped there, and, as I dug through the earthen mass, I would unearth a quartz crystal and add it to my sack. Through my hands passed crystals that had never seen the light of day, had never been seen or touched by a single human being. By the end of the day, I had accumulated a hundred or so crystals. That night after leaving the mine area, my mind was filled with images of crystals whenever I closed my eyes. My directed focus on finding crystals for so long had created inside me visions of crystals, long after the physical impressions I had of crystals were no longer present before me.

Steiner suggests that we arbitrarily select one thought and choose to hold that thought, thinking through it repeatedly, much as I did when I dug for crystals for an entire day. This is the meditation he suggests that we perform.

**[page 14] Each time you do this, you will experience it more intensely. By repeating a thought, you can make that thought the single object of your inner experience while, at the same time, holding at a distance all outer impressions and memories that might arise in your soul. In fact, you can make this complete and exclusive dedication to a thought or feeling a regular inner activity.**

This is similar to what I did when I dug for crystals over a long period of time. I thought of crystals to the exclusion of anything else.

**[page 14] By the activity of focusing on a thought in this way, we can strengthen the forces of inner experience; while *inner experience*, in turn, as it were, condenses or intensifies. One can recognize the effects of this from the kind of self-observation that**

**sets in after inner activity has continued over a sufficiently long period of time.**

If you continue this process, you will affirm for yourself the idea of experience separate from your body. This is a key step to recognizing the existence of the etheric body inside yourself.

**[page 17] By means of an experience such as I have described, you can gain the ability to observe what belongs to your own self without using senses and reason. You will then not only know something different about the world than your bodily instruments permit you to know, but you will also *know differently*.**

The soul that was able to call a piece of the outer world its physical body, learns to call a piece of the non-sensory (suprasensory) world its etheric body.

**[page 18] The soul calls a piece of the sensory, outer world the physical body. A soul able to experience *outside the physical body* may further consider a part of the non-sensory outer world as also belonging to it. If you push forward and observe that area accessible beyond the sensory world, you will be able to speak of a body that belongs to you that is imperceptible to the senses. We can call that body the "elemental," or "etheric," body.**

When we journey into the outer world we encounter the idea of a physical body, and when our soul journeys into areas not-sensible in the outer world, we encounter the idea of our etheric body.

### **MEDITATION 3. CLAIRVOYANT COGNITION OF THE ELEMENTAL WORLD**

Clairvoyant cognition provides experiences of worlds unknown to our ordinary sense perception and thinking. Instead suprasensory experiences rise up from the soul.

**[page 19] By means of memory images, something that we previously experienced becomes present in our soul. Through suprasensory images, likewise, what exists sometime or somewhere in the suprasensory world becomes inner, soul experience. The very nature of these experiences is such that we can look upon them as communications from a suprasensory world unfolding within us.**

If you have the ability to have suprasensory experiences, you will be able to perceive a force-being filling an entire plant. Its presence is especially prominent in the seed of a plant which is relatively simple in the material world, but very complex in the suprasensory world. The seed of a *planet*, such as the Earth, also has a force-being whose existence preceded its sensory existence.

**[page 20] The suprasensory form "force-form" is strongest in the observation of a plant seed. In a seed, the sensible component is rather simple and inconspicuous, but the suprasensory component is complex, embracing everything that, from the suprasensory world, collaborates in the structure and growth of the plant. Suprasensory observation of the whole Earth likewise reveals a force-being that you can know with certainty existed before anything sensory arose upon the Earth. This enables you to experience the presence of the suprasensory forces that collaborated in the formation of the Earth in ancient times.**

In a wonderful metaphor Steiner uses ice floating in water to describe how we observe *only* the chunks of material comprising our physical world and *miss* the essential fluid in which they exist. Ice forms out of the water and precedes the existence of the ice which forms from the water and floats in it, much as the suprasensory world precedes the existence of the sensory world which precipitates, as it were, from the suprasensory world(9).

**[page 21] Those who are able to observe . . . do not merely experience something *added* to the sensory world. They experience a world within which the sensory world seems, for**

**example, like pieces of ice floating in water. If you could see only the ice and not the water, you would recognize only the ice, and not the water, as real. That is, if you hold only to what is revealed through your senses, you will deny the suprasensory world, of which the sensory, perceptible world is a part, just as the pieces of ice floating in water are part of the entire mass of water.**

Remember in the paragraph before the page 11 passage we spoke of two types of people, those with a burning desire to know the spiritual world and those with a cool, disinterested view of it? Steiner explains that a burning desire is as just ineffectual in having recognizable suprasensory experiences as a disinterested detachment. The burning desire masks an event arising out of the spiritual world with an invisible fog. The disinterested detachment causes the person to miss the arising event completely. I am not able to do a clairvoyant observation at will, up until now. But, I have been able to notice on many occasions events which seem to qualify. Take this otherwise trivial example. I was driving on a four-line boulevard in the right lane when I suddenly decided for no discernible reason to switch to the left lane. Within seconds a truck came to a stop and would have blocked my free passage had I not switched lanes exactly when I did. Lucky coincidences, materialists would call such events as this, but because of their disinterested detachment they would have never noticed when one of these events happened to them. I have begun thanking my Guardian Angel when these unexpected fortunate events happen, which is my way of acknowledging the occurrence in my life of a suprasensory event(10).

**[page 23] Burning desire spreads a kind of invisible fog before our body-free gaze. Disinterest means that, though suprasensory things may actually reveal themselves, they are not noticed. This lack of interest sometimes manifests in an odd way. Many people quite honestly wish to experience clairvoyance, but unfortunately they begin with too definite a preconception of how such experiences should appear if they are to be recognized as genuine. When real experiences then happen, they slip past such people, who show no interest in them because they do not fit their preconceptions.**

Beginning clairvoyants are like children, beings newly arrived in a world which surrounds them who must develop perceptual and reasoning capability to move around and make use of their surroundings.

**[page 24] Beginning clairvoyants prepare their apparatus for forming ideas in much the same way as children do, but on a higher level. They allow strengthened and concentrated thoughts to act upon it. In this way, the apparatus is gradually transformed and becomes capable of taking the suprasensory world into the life of representation.**

The eye cannot see itself except by reflection. Our eyes are invisible to us in the process of seeing. The clairvoyant strives to have a body that is invisible and imperceptible when seeing into the suprasensory world.

**[page 24] You can feel how your soul activity works formatively on your body. At first, your body strongly resists the life of your soul. You experience your soul as a foreign body within you. Then you notice how your body is slowly adjusting to your soul experiences. Finally, just as you are unaware of your eye when looking at the world of color, you cease to feel your body when the suprasensory world appears before you. Before the soul can see into the suprasensory world, the body must become invisible, imperceptible.**

Once one is able to recognize involuntary spontaneous perceptions of the suprasensory world, the next step to create these voluntarily, and then to learn to direct them where you wish. Steiner explains how the process evolves.

**[page 24] As a rule, once you have thus achieved a state of intentional clairvoyance, you will be able to produce the state by concentrating upon a thought that you can experience inwardly with special intensity. You will then find that dedicated concentration upon**



**that thought produces clairvoyant activity.**

**At first, you will not be in a position to determine exactly what you will see. Suprasensory phenomena and processes that you are quite unprepared for and therefore have no desire to produce, will play into your soul. Nevertheless, with further inner strengthening, you will be able to direct your spiritual gaze to things you intend to see.**

The best advice is calmly waiting for a favorable moment and never forcing anything.

**[page 25] The human cognitive apparatus requires a calm ripening for particular experiences. Whoever lacks the patience to wait for such a ripening will have flawed or imprecise observations.**

#### **MEDITATION 4. THE "GUARDIAN OF THE THRESHOLD"**

In the classic work of Alfred Korzybski, [Science and Sanity](#), he describes the *time index* which means "all things change" so that A at time(1) does not equal A at time(2). If you encounter something at one time, it is not necessarily the same something at another time. Clairvoyants for ages have warned people against approaching the Guardian of the Threshold of the suprasensory world, up until now. Steiner is stepping forward to say that time is past, and our task is to do exactly that. We must learn to know the Guardian of the Threshold from now on

**[page 32] We now live in a time when we must become increasingly familiar with the nature of the suprasensory world if our soul lives are to be adequate to meet life's demands. The spreading of suprasensory insights, along with knowledge of the Guardian of the Threshold, is one of the tasks humanity must undertake now and in the future.**

Two questions arise as we undertake this task: 1) What is this task that is so difficult that we have been warned against for so long? And 2) Where shall I find the strength to bear what is being laid upon me? These questions presuppose that we are wishing to enter the suprasensory world and then return to the sensory world. Clearly this will require switching from one way of understanding and judging and back.

#### **ANSWERS TO QUESTION 1): Why is it so hard?**

We must face in raw truth the unsavory ugliness of our inner self in a way we rarely if ever encounter in the sensory world.

**[page 28, 29] It may seem like a hard fact to bear, but it is the case: you must learn to face freely the ugliness of your own self. . . . Through true self-knowledge, for example, you experience that, while you thought your feelings toward someone were friendly, in the depths of your soul you were actually nursing a hidden jealousy or hatred. You know that such unexpressed feelings will come to light one day. You know, too, that it would be quite superficial to say to yourself: "Now that I know that this is the case, all I have to do is eradicate my jealousy and hatred." But you will soon discover that such thoughts prove very weak when the urge to satisfy your hatred or express your jealousy breaks from your soul with all the power of a natural force.**

We must give up our most precious possession, our 'I'.

**[page 30] Your soul must step across a threshold, leaving behind not just this or that treasured possession but its very own being. It must be able to say that it now sees that what it once valued as its most powerful truth may on the other side of the threshold of the suprasensory world appear as the greatest error.**

People who are scientists and philosophers may prefer to live only with what the sensory world and what their reasoning ability reveals to them.

**[page 30] They therefore avoid approaching the threshold of the suprasensory world. They may cover up that avoidance by saying, for instance, that rational thinking and science cannot support the truth of what is beyond that threshold. The truth, however, is that such people love rational thinking and science as they know them, because this rational thinking and science are so strongly connected to their "I." This is a very common form of self-love something that we cannot take into the suprasensory world.**

## **ANSWER TO QUESTION 2): Where can I find the strength I need?**

One must set aside what one believed was truth and must learn a different way of judging.

**[page 31] The proper approach is for people to prepare in such a way that, upon entering the suprasensory world, they can set aside what in ordinary life they feel most strongly to be the truth and thus be able to perceive and judge things differently. But one must also understand that, in resuming one's customary relationship to the sensory world, one has to use the feelings and way of reasoning that are valid for that world. One must learn not only to live in two worlds, but also to live in them in two quite different ways. A person must not allow his or her healthy power of judgment in the world of sense and reason to be adversely affected just because a very different way of judging must be used in the other world.**

This meditation, the process which Steiner gives us, involves a series of challenges we must face and overcome if we are to enter the suprasensory world and return successfully([11](#)).

## **MEDITATION 5. THE ASTRAL BODY**

Everyone studying Rudolf Steiner's spiritual science learns that human beings have four bodies, the Physical Body, the Etheric Body, the Astral Body, and the I. There it is: *content*. Somehow we are to imagine that these four bodies exist inside of each other, like nested Russian dolls. This can be challenging for a sensory-oriented human. The value of these meditations is that we can, by following Steiner's suggestion, go through a process by which we experience the individual bodies directly and are able to affirm for ourselves their existence as part of our being. Instead of an abstract conception of each body, we obtain a direct experience of each.

**[page 32] When one experiences a suprasensory outer world through the elemental body, one is less closed off from that world than one is from one's physical surroundings when one experiences them through the sensory body. At the same time, just as one bears the matter and forces of the physical outer world in one's physical body, it could be said that one's relationship to this suprasensory outer world is such that one unites with oneself certain substances of the elemental world to form an elemental body.**

This experience of the elemental body is what we call the *etheric body*. By further meditation, we can achieve sufficient soul strength to witness a new world emerge in yourself.

**[page 35] *This world is different both from the sensory world and the elemental world. Thus, to the first suprasensory world the elemental, or etheric, world we add a second. At first, this second suprasensory world is wholly an inner world. You will feel that you carry it within yourself, and that you are alone with it.***

Steiner says (Page 36) that one can best reach the suprasensory beings connected with plants if you love plants in the sensory world. I take a lot of photos of plants and especially their flowers. In particular I look for the tiniest flowers that most people walk by or trod upon without ever noticing them and I give them love by taking a flattering photo of them. I had never thought of my taking these photos as concealing an inclination toward the plant world, up until now.

**[page 36] A person may pass by plants in the sensory world quite without love, and yet that person's soul may conceal an unconscious inclination toward the plant world. In that case, this love can awaken when he or she enters the suprasensory world.**

In addition my close observation and taking photos of these tiny flowers indicate not only a love of them, but also a *respect* and *awe* of them. These are two other important soul qualities.

**[page 36, 37] We must always include respect and awe among the inner soul qualities. Such soul qualities open the door so you can come to know beings of the suprasensory world. A sure way of coming to know the suprasensory world opens when we free up the access to suprasensory beings by relating to their reflections within us. In the sensory world, you love a being after you have come to know it. In the second suprasensory world, you learn to love a being's image before encountering that being's reality, because the image appears before the meeting with the being.**

What we come to know in this way is the *awakener of the elemental world*, a being within us which we feel to be the *awakener*. This is how one comes to really know the astral body by experiencing it directly.

**[page 37] Thus, the soul learns of the presence of a third nature within it that is apart from the physical and elemental bodies. We call this third nature *the astral body*, meaning by this for the moment nothing more than what lives within the soul's being as we have described above.**

## **MEDITATION 6. THE "I"-BODY or THOUGHT-BODY**

As you progress further outside your sensory body into the etheric body, you feel an expansion of your being; as you move into your astral body, you feel as if you have moved into another being where spiritual beings are working into your "I"-being. You will meet the time spirits who determine the progress of human evolution, and the spirits of form whose thoughts are real forces of nature. For example, one comes to understand a tornado as a "hand movement" of a spiritual being.

**[page 38] You will recognize then that it is only to our normal sensory perception that the forces of nature appear as our senses normally believe them to be. You will realize that, in reality, wherever a force of nature is active, it is the thought of a being that is expressed, just as the human soul expresses itself through hand movements.**

Next you will experience all in your soul as a kind of memory, a reflection of what you were. This will lead you to experience the second "I" which experiences your previous "I" as something within you.

**[page 39, 40] As, in your previous everyday life, your "I" felt independent in relation to its memories, so now your newly acquired "I" feels independent of that earlier "I". It feels it belongs to the world of purely spiritual beings. And from this *experience* — and not some theory — you recognize what your "I"-being (as you viewed it before) really is.**

You will have reached the experience St. Paul talks of Corinthians 13:12, "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face." In Paul's time, there were no back-silvered mirrors so any glass used as a mirror reflected only dark images.

**[page 40] It [your first I-being] now appears as a fabric of memory ideas that are produced by the physical, elemental, and astral bodies, just as mirror images are produced by a mirror. No more than one considers oneself to be one with one's reflection in a mirror, does a soul that has experienced itself in the spiritual world consider itself the same being that experienced itself in the sensory world.**

Even though the mirror is only an analogy, this reflected image is necessary for your self-revelation and

ascent into the spiritual world. You begin to realize that your I-being (or I-body) is something you *have*, not something you *are*, as Steiner emphasizes below:

**[page 40] The fabric of memories, which you now look on as your former "I",**

**we may call the "I'-body" or "thought-body." In this context, the word *body* must be understood in a broader sense than usual. Body, here, means all that you experience as having to do with you, of which you say, not that you *are* that, but that you *have* that, that it's yours.**

This leads us to the next stage of a being which can retain not just the fabric of memories, but all that was experienced in sensory experience, namely, an "I" higher than our ordinary "I".

**[page 40] For to continue its existence, what has been experienced in sensory existence requires a being in whom it can be retained, just as memories of sensory being are retained in the ordinary "I".**

When this happens, you will exist in a world of spiritual beings who hold their sensory existence as a memory.

**[page 40, 41] Suprasensory cognition reveals that human beings exist in the world of spiritual beings where they hold their sensory existence within themselves like a memory. Therefore, to the question, *What will become of all that I am now when I die?* the clairvoyant researcher replies, *You will be what you can retain of yourself by the strength of your existence as a spiritual being among other spiritual beings.***

**You can cognize the nature of these spiritual beings, including your own. This knowledge is immediate experience. In this way, you will come to know that spiritual beings, including your own soul, have an existence for which sensory existence is a passing revelation.**

Perhaps you are wondering if you will see in the spiritual world the people you had known during your earthly life.

**[page 41] Thus, in its primitive form, the vital question enters ordinary consciousness, *After death, will I see the people I know and am connected to in earthly life?* Genuine research, based on experience, enables you to answer this question with a resounding *Yes*.**

The strengthening of your soul life leads you to recognize within you your second "I"-being.

**[page 43] We have here an indication of the direction in which the strengthening of the soul life through the power that lives in thinking must lead. *You learn to recognize something in yourself that appears to your soul as a second being within it.***

Once you have undertaken a review of your life, all the way back into your earliest memories of childhood, you will come to understand how you paved the way for your own destiny.

**[page 44] You can then push through to the following realization: *"Just as I have worked on myself since I awakened to consciousness, so I was already working on myself before my present consciousness awoke."***

You will have then moved to discovering your superordinate or higher second-"I" which created the lower or ordinary first-"I".

**[page 44] Working your way through to a superordinate "I"-being within the ordinary**

**"I" leads not only to the recognition that your thoughts bring a theoretical understanding of such a higher, superordinate "I". It also leads to the *experience* of the living being of this "I" in its reality as power in you and to the sense that the ordinary "I" is a creation of the superordinate "I". This feeling marks the true beginning of seeing the spiritual nature of the soul.**

## MEDITATION 7

### THE NATURE OF EXPERIENCE IN SUPRASENSORY WORLDS

Perhaps proceeding upon these meditations, these processes, seems too daunting for you, and you would prefer to allow your soul to continue, unaided, its natural development. Isn't it better to wait and see how your spiritual life will unfold upon its own? Steiner says, emphatically, *No*.

**[page 45] Such a thought will always be rejected when one realizes that we human beings, by nature, must help ourselves and that, if we fail in our duty and do nothing about the forces waiting to unfold in our souls, those forces will spoil. Forces of self-development exist in every human soul. When these forces and their meanings are experienced, there is no one who would not wish to obey the call to unfold them.**

I must point out the *bootstrap effect* here. How can one wish to unfold these forces if one has never experienced them? It's like lifting yourself from your own bootstraps. In a new computer you cannot run a program until a program loader can load it. The program loader is also a program, so how can it get into a new computer? Called a bootstrap loader, this small initial program loader must be loaded by hand by a human being in a factory. So how can you wish to obey the call to unfold these important forces and their meanings? You must load this desire yourself and create a small experience of them (like a bootstrap loader) and then you will find it worthy and important to continue to unfold the forces of self-development you first started on your own.

If you fear that by doing these meditations, you may experience loneliness such as being lost above some endless pit, Relax. You will, Steiner says, but adds, "Such feelings are seeds that produce the fruit of suprasensory cognition."

**[page 46] In a sense, all these experiences carry deep within them something hidden. When we have these experiences, these hidden qualities are brought to their maximum tension. "Something" then bursts the feeling of loneliness, which is like a shell surrounding this something. This "something" then enters one's soul life to become a means of knowing.**

I recall a drawing of a man walking on stepping stones across a large stream and stopping in the middle where there were no more stones, only a sign saying, "Coming soon: another stone." That stuck with me over the past forty years as a metaphor for life, of how to handle the various challenges of life which seem unsurmountable when we first encounter them. Go as far as you can, then wait, thinking, "Have patience, another stepping stone will surely appear." I am also reminded of how Milton Erickson liked to finish a healing story to a patient with this phrase, "A cool breeze will come."

**[page 46] You must always remember that, when you travel the right path, behind each experience another awaits you. If the first experience is there, the other cannot fail to appear. This means that, whatever you have to endure, you will find that a new power enters immediately. If you reflect on it calmly and peacefully, and give yourself the time to notice what is trying to reveal itself in your soul, this power will allow you to bear what has happened.**

The main thing is concentration over time, which will strengthen your soul with these meditations as you absorb the content and follow the process assiduously.



**[page 47] Through such absorption which can become a habit, and even a necessity of soul life, just as breathing is a necessity of the body you can draw together, concentrate, and thereby strengthen the powers of your soul. But you must succeed in maintaining during the period of inner absorption a state in which no sensory impressions or any memories of them intrude upon the life of the soul. All memories of what you have experienced in daily life, of what gave joy or pain to the soul, must be silenced. *The soul must devote itself completely and solely to what you have determined shall exist in it.***

The suprasensory world is moral we are told, but how can that be? Does not evil exist there as it does in the sensory? Is there no envy or hatred there? Yes, there is envy and hatred but they quickly cancel each other out. Steiner explains:

**[page 49] When in ordinary life we say that an evil deed burns in someone's soul, we know we are speaking colloquially. We know that real burning is something quite different. This distinction does not exist in the suprasensory worlds. Hatred and envy are both forces whose corresponding effects we may call the natural processes of those worlds. In the suprasensory world, hatred or envy result in the being who is hated or envied devouring, even annihilating, the hater or envier. Destructive processes that work adversely in the spiritual world are thereby formed.**

The opposite is love which is always welcome and warming.

**[page 50] In the suprasensory world we may call only those beings "beautiful" who reveal their inner experiences, what lives in them, to other beings so that these can also participate in their experience. In the higher worlds, the capacity to reveal everything within you, without hiding anything, is called "beautiful." This notion of beauty is identical to what we might call naked honesty, the sincere expression of what one carries within oneself.**

On the other hand, dishonest self-revelation, lying, is ugly, and is the opposite of beauty. As I stated this years ago in [Matherne's Rule #45](#), "No ugliness comes armed with truth."

When I was a freshman in college, I had a chance to learn chess for the first time. I had a desire to learn chess and wanted to be able to beat anyone. I heard that this guy down the hall beat everyone he played. I was drawn to him and played him every spare minute I could, always losing. I lacked the ability to beat him in chess. He had complete mastery over me. Over time, I eventually beat him, once, and then several more times, till I felt I had learned all I wanted from him and felt no need to play him anymore. Desires are similar in the spiritual world: one is drawn by one's *lack* to someone who is *complete* in that regard.

**[page 49, 50] What we could call desires in the spiritual world flame forth from what a being sees outside itself. A being there who lacks some quality that, according to its nature it feels it should have, will see another being who has that quality then it cannot help but see that other being before it continually. In the sensory world, the eye naturally sees what is visible. In the suprasensory world, a being is always guided by the lack of a quality into the vicinity of one who is complete in that regard. The sight of that being is a constant reproach. It acts as a genuine force to impel the being who is burdened by the lack to wish to correct its defect.**

Steiner indicated that dishonest self-revelation such as lying is ugly, the opposite of beauty. But he adds that the lie we feel to be ugly need not be ugly in its outward appearance. Deceptions are possible in the sensory world and one must be on guard for people who mask their true intentions.

**[page 51, 52] For instance, a being may come before you in the suprasensory world whom you can quite correctly call evil, even though — if your sense of beauty derives**

**from sensory life — it reveals itself to you as beautiful. In this case, you will see correctly only if you can penetrate to the being's inner foundation. You will then experience how the "beautiful" manifestation is only a deceptive mask. What you thought to be beautiful, based on your sense-based understanding of that idea, will then become the object of your hate. At that moment, the evil being ceases to be able to create the illusion of beauty but must reveal its true form to you — a form that can only be an incomplete expression of what lives within it.**

Among the primitive Senoi people of Malaysia, they share dreams with each other in their communal residence hut each morning. They encourage the dreamer to relive their dream and when some ugly or menacing entity approaches the dreamer, they tell the dreamer to ask the menace to remove its mask to reveal its inner self. By the progressive removal of deceptive masks, the dreamer learns — the true intention of the entity and asks it to become a friend, even to present a token of its esteem to the dreamer as a gift.

The primitive Senoi people have brought a process from the suprasensory world into their community which helps troubled dreamers to find peace in their lives. This unmasking technique is a process that Steiner says can be valuable when we enter the suprasensory world(12).

## MEDITATION 8

### BEHOLDING YOUR PREVIOUS EARTHLY LIVES

Among the Senoi people, there is really no danger from the dreamwork through which they lead even their children. If during dreamwork, a child sees a deadly tiger approaching, the child, by asking it to remove its mask successively, will end with the tiger revealing a face to the child that wipes away any sense of danger and this process strengthens the child's ability to deal with its life in the waking world. Steiner says something similar about a journey into the suprasensory world.

**[page 53] When the soul' s journey into suprasensory worlds is undertaken properly, one cannot really speak of dangers. If the instructions given to the soul were dangerous to human beings, such a journey would not serve its purpose. This purpose is always to strengthen the soul, to gather its powers, so that we can bear the experiences we must undergo if we wish to behold and understand worlds other than the sensory world.**

One of my journeys into the suprasensory world enabled me to see into the future. I was newly unemployed and had taken the time away from work to study various techniques of psychotherapy, one of which was Senoi Dreamwork. Jack Johnston led me through a frightening dream, asking me to re-enter the dream and re-live it. I saw myself in this automobile junkyard with a strong dark storm coming, so I got into this old Buick for safety. A huge tornado suddenly appeared, coming directly towards me. Jack instructed me to make friends with the tornado, which I did. Then he said, "Ask it for a token of its friendship." I did, and amazingly a hand appeared from out of the tornado with a spinning gyroscope which it gave to me. Jack said, "Hold this gift and begin a quest to find it in your world." I didn't have long to wait because in a few days my first unemployment check arrived in the mail, and there, on the cover of the envelope, was stamped a gyroscope! It was a symbol of the energy I had stored by my payments into the Unemployment Insurance System which was now being returned to me and providing me stability in my life.

**[page 54] Beginning in our own time, more and more people will wish to understand the suprasensory worlds. True observation of human life shows that, starting in our time, human souls have entered a condition in which they cannot enter into the necessary relationship to life without understanding the suprasensory worlds.**

If you understand that you live in the suprasensory world before your existence in the sensory world, it will become clear that the answer to the two enigmas I had posed earlier is that we exist between lifetimes

in the suprasensory world. Steiner explains how we can behold our life's course beyond our earthly existence.

**[page 54, 55] Once your soul's journey has progressed so far that you carry within you as memory all that you call "yourself " — that is, your being in the sensory world and you experience yourself in a newly attained higher "I", you will be able to behold your life's course beyond earthly existence. The reality will then arise before your spiritual gaze that existence in the spiritual world precedes existence in the sensory world and that the true causes of the formation of sensory existence lie in that spiritual existence. You will learn that before you received a sensory, perceptible body and entered this earthly life, you already lived a purely spiritual life. You will see how the person you are now, with your capacities and instincts, was prepared in a previous existence in a purely spiritual world. You will see yourself living as a spiritual being before you entered the sensory, perceptible world.**

Where is the evidence that all of what Steiner claims is true? The answer is "Put your hands into the wound in My side" which Christ Jesus told Thomas the doubter. But it is not as simple for people today to believe this as it was for Thomas who was provided sensory data. People today still require sensory data and those who do *not* wish to do the work in the realm of the spirit to acquire the evidence will never be convinced Steiner's veracity.

**[page 57]There is nothing in spiritual science that cannot be supported by evidence similar to that used in natural science. I must admit, however, that it is quite obviously much more difficult for spiritual scientific proofs to achieve recognition than it is for proofs in the natural sciences. This happens not because spiritual science lacks rigor, but because the people to whom its proofs are presented do not feel the basis in sensory facts that makes it easy for them to agree with natural scientific proofs. But that has nothing to do with the strength of the proofs. Anyone who is in a position to compare natural scientific proofs with spiritual scientific proofs, in an objective, impartial manner, will be easily convinced that the latter have the same value as the former.**

### Afterword to the 1918 Edition

Why do so many people deny the existence of the suprasensory world? I have found in my own experience, as Steiner claims, "Suprasensory experience is really much more widespread than people usually think." In my list of Matherne's Rules, you can find multiple examples of the efficacy of the rules often come from a brief thinking trip into the suprasensory world(13).

**[page 61] Interaction with the spiritual world is actually something quite common and universal. But the ability to follow this interaction cognitively, with one's power of consciousness working swiftly, is won only with difficulty.**

But most people slough off the idea of a suprasensory world, and few people are willing, open-mindedly, to hold the simple unanswered question, "Is there a suprasensory world?" If they did, an answer will come to them over some time, and soon they will become convinced of such a world and of their existence in it between lifetimes. The pathway to this understanding lies before you, but it is up to you to take the first step.

### ----- Footnotes -----

#### Footnote 1.

Steiner calls *method* what I prefer to call *process*. Information is *content*; what we do with information is *process*. In my Essay [Art is the Process of Destruction](#) I elaborate on the important distinction between content and process. In the twenty-first century, everyone knows what software is, but while many may use software (in process), few write software (as

content). *Process* is what a software app does when it *runs* inside a Smartphone or PC.

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

**Footnote 2.**

This is true of adults, but every adult was once a child who retained for several years after birth the ability to see the spiritual world full of elementals, fairies, elves, angels, etal. A child's *imaginary* friend is a real being the child is still able to see.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 2.](#)

**Footnote 3.**

Meaning *invisible-to-the-material-senses*. Note: when one walks the pathway Steiner describes, the spiritual world will eventually appear to one's *newly-developed-senses*.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 3.](#)

**Footnote 4.**

These friends later formed a group called Steiner98 and we enjoyed lively conversations on-line together. I have met about a half-dozen of this group in person, and we have become fast-friends at a new level. NOTE: My earliest reviews were very short, but my reviews expanded as my knowledge of spiritual science grew.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 4.](#)

**Footnote 5.**

This second book, *The Threshold of the Spiritual World*, GA#17, was reviewed in 2005 [here](#). It appeared in a separate volume by itself, with a different translation and with page numbers which do not match this combined GA#16 and #17 volume.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 5.](#)

**Footnote 6.**

Note: Friedemann Schwarzkopf uses *content* and *experience* to delineate the two areas I call *content* and *process* in this review and describe fully in my Essay, [Art Is the Process of Destruction](#)

[Return to text directly before Footnote 6.](#)

**Footnote 7.**

The translator of this volume uses the word *suprasensory* in place of *supersensible*. While the two words have the same definition, this novel word usage took me aback for awhile until I realized there was no intended difference between the two words. It was a difference without a difference.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 7.](#)

**Footnote 8.**

This transformation of our body over long periods of time requires that we each serially reincarnate in a changing body in each new lifetime, and, rightly understood, that gives us the answer to my first enigma of what happens before we are born.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 8.](#)

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**Footnote 9.**

Too often people view spiritual worlds, such as they call Heaven, as existing in some far away place. Not so. Rightly understood, our physical world floats like ice cubes in the water of the spiritual world. It is everywhere around us all the time.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 9.](#)

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**Footnote 10.**

Consider how we are related to our Guardian Angel as, e.g., our pet dog is to us. We feed, care, and give it loving attention. What does it give back to us? A wagging tail, companionship, and loving acknowledgment of our presence. Does not our personal Guardian Angel deserve a loving acknowledgment from us of their presence? A suggestion: give your Guardian Angel a name and thank it personally when something good happens to you.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 10.](#)

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**Footnote 11.**

In the 1960s people entered the suprasensory world without adequate preparation by taking LSD and some of the results were disastrous. Most prominent example was the suicide of Art Linkletter's daughter.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 11.](#)

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**Footnote 12.**

I am indebted to Jack L. Johnston for his development of the Senoi Dream Technique and the workshops in which he shared those techniques with me back in the 1970s.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 12.](#)

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**Footnote 13.**

Examples are [#36](#) Remember the future. It hums in the present, [#25](#) What is the power of an unanswered question?, [#10](#) EAT-O-TWIST!, [#9](#) The Limitation Eraser, [#5](#) There's always even more. And there are even more examples.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 13.](#)

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