

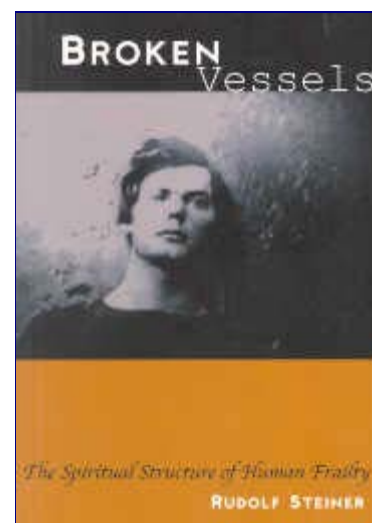
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A READER'S JOURNAL

Broken Vessels
The Spiritual Structure of Human Frailty
11 Lectures in Dornach in September 1924,
GA#318
by
Rudolf Steiner

Translated by Gladys Hahn
Published by SteinerBooks in 2006
A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2007



These lectures formed part of a course in Pastoral

Medicine which Rudolf Steiner gave to a mixed audience of priests and physicians. In it he wished to give both the priest and the physician a view of the human being as a spiritual as well as physical being. These lectures were part of seventy or so lectures he gave in the month of September 1924, which are characterized by Michael Lipson in the Foreword this way, "It was a last, incandescent burst of generosity that many feel contributed to his death the following March." Seventy lectures in one month, which included themes of the dramatic arts and the Apocalypse of St. John, means he was giving over two lectures every day.

Were the spiritual experiences of Hildegard von Bingen due to migraine headaches as some analysts today would aver? Or were they real experiences, if somewhat unbalanced, as Steiner claims? If we are to understand these and other experiences of real human beings, we must be willing as either priests or physicians to open ourselves up to the four bodies of the human being, the physical body, etheric or life body, the astral body, and the Ego body. Those bodies are to be understood through living thinking, the kind of thinking that Steiner portrayed for us in his writing ever and again. If we would truly understand these four bodies of the full human, the *anthropos*, we must come to grips with how Steiner describes them in his [Theosophy](#) and other writings. One cannot understand these bodies with the dead, passive thinking using abstract concepts which are the modus operandi of scientists, up until now.

[page 133] Humans cannot be known by uncreative thoughts, because by their very nature they themselves are creative. One must re-create if one wants knowledge. With today's passive thinking one can only understand the periphery of the human being; one has to ignore the inner being.

If you, dear Reader, do not understand the four bodies of the *anthropos* and do not wish to understand them, stop reading this now. If, however, you wish to understand them, read Steiner's [Theosophy](#) and then come back to read this review or the book of lectures itself. Or else how can you ever be expected to understand, as his audience of priests and physicians did in 1924, when he explained that in mentally retarded persons, "the physical body remains comparatively isolated because the etheric body . . . does not entirely penetrate it, so that now the astral and etheric bodies and ego organization are closely united with one another and the physical organism is separate from them." (From page 10 of Lipson's Foreword.) Note how we describe such a person by saying off-handedly, "He's not all there." Certainly his physical body is there, but the other three are not fully present.

Sometimes people who seem broken to us are experiencing a full inner life of which we often have no clue. They seem to have found access to spiritual worlds of which we are likewise clueless. Lipson's answer is revealing and insightful.

[page 12] When inwardly broken, we may emerge from the network of accustomed concepts that normally paralyzes the world for us. The writer Flannery O'Connor suggested a similar view in her reply to an interviewer who asked her why the best American literature was from the South. "Because we lost the war," she said, meaning the Civil War. The assault on ossified structure led, in some cases, to fruitful openings.

Lipson also quotes Steiner aptly about how one must transcend mere knowledge of minerals and plants if one is prepare medicines which truly heal the ill. This should be a wake-up call to such organizations like the American Medical Association who are seriously ill with an untreated case of materialism, up until now. Truth in advertising would require the AMA to be called the "American Materialistic Association."

[page 122] You can see that one must recognize the spirit in nature, the spirit that is in the mineral and plant kingdoms of the world. It is the spirit, not the substance, that one must know, because in reality one heals the human being through the spirit that is in the mineral and the plant.

If one is not healing with the spirit that is in medicines, then one could expect that new medications would arise to popularity, and then be quickly followed by lawsuits from those who were harmed more than healed. And, a quick scan of television commercials will evince that to be the case.

Steiner fully recognized the specific abilities, tasks, and duties of the priest and physician and exhorted them to avoid intruding into each other's fields of work: fields of study, *yes*, fields of work, *no*.

[page 18] Apparently the thought has even been entertained that theologians should actually acquire medical knowledge. Well, of course, it is always good to acquire knowledge. But the important thing here is to realize absolutely clearly that physicians, in addition to the cultivation of their thinking, feeling, and willing, have had specific medical training. People should not play with the idea that they can push their way into the world with bits and pieces of medical knowledge without this specific medical training — even if they are theologians! On the other hand, physicians must develop a special conception of their profession; they must learn through pastoral medicine that something essential is expressed when it is said: The flame of offering belongs to the priest, the Mercury staff to the physician. And only through the working together of the flame of offering and the Mercury staff is a healthful cooperation possible. One must not want to heal with the flame of offering, or to celebrate ritual with the Mercury staff. But one must realize that both are divine service. The more fully this is realized, the better their cooperation will be, with physician remaining physician and priest remaining priest, and the more healing will be their work in the world.

One might think that the priest works in the realm of the spiritual and the physician in the realm of the physical. That would be easy enough for priests and physicians to distinguish their fields of operation in a human being, *if* that were the case. Steiner gives us a look at how the physician operates. Even though physicians may be governed by the rules of the materialistic AMA, when they treat a human being, they are adjusting the consciousness as well as the physiology of their patient. And the consciousness entails a person's soul, even though how the soul is affected may not be known consciously by either the patient or the physician, the effect is there, and the physician ignores that effect at their patient's and their own peril.

[page 23] Ordinary consumption of food, ordinary breathing, and other ordinary processes remain in the physical sphere, and the higher members work indirectly through the physical sphere. Higher forces are active through the physical organism. In contrast, when you are working as a physician or therapist you draw the patient's soul directly into his or her physical body. Indeed we can say if physicians understand their profession properly, they realize that they enter directly into the realm of the spiritual. It only seems that therapy is merely a physical or biological process. True therapeutic measures always involve the patient's soul, even though at first this may remain unknown to the ordinary consciousness. You should observe what actually takes place in a patient when, let us say, a fever is suddenly lowered by some therapeutic means. In this event processes are introduced into the innermost depth of the patient's being — just as the illness itself had worked

into this depth — beyond the merely physical and biological realm. So we have looked at the picture from the medical point of view. We have seen how doctoring, healing, by its very nature leads from the physical realm into the spiritual.

The priest, on the other hand, performs rituals in full view and consciousness of their flock, be it a church or at the bedside of an ill member of their flock. During the ritual, the spiritual world flows into both the priest and the parishioner.

[page 23, 24] Priests whose calling is not one of teaching, if they are truly active priests, then they are connected with the ritual, and the ritual includes the sacraments. But the sacraments are not symbols. What are they? They consist of the fact that external events take place, which are not exhausted, in chemical or biological processes. They contain orientations which are embodied in the physical-biological sphere, but which have their origin in the spiritual world. Sense-perceptible actions are performed, and spirit streams into the actions. Spiritual reality is present in the ritual on the level of sense perception. And what takes place there in front of the congregation takes place first of all before their conscious observation. Nothing is permitted to take place except what does take place in that way. Otherwise it would not be ritual, not sacrament, but suggestion. The sacraments — if they are done right — are never allowed to contain any element of suggestion. All the more, therefore, they are able to contain what is spiritual. They take place before the waking consciousness of the participants, but they work into the sphere of the life forces.

Since no suggestion is present in a ritual, a sacrament, e.g. communion, cannot be symbolic, but must involve a streaming of the spiritual world directly into the person receiving communion. Here we can see the difference in approach of the physician whose therapy brings life to consciousness and the priest whose ritual brings consciousness to life. (Page 24)

But both the priest and the physician exist in a modern world which the organizations they belong to have changed dramatically. The physician's organization ignores the spiritual element and the priest's organization ignores the physical elements of their charges.

[page 24] There you have the two activities in polarity: therapeutic activity and the celebration of the sacraments. In therapeutic measures, the course leads from life to consciousness, and consciousness becomes a helper, at least (in ordinary consciousness) an unconscious helper, in the healing process. In the celebration of the sacraments life is made a helper for what is enacted before the consciousness. Both of these activities have to be grasped spiritually in deep inwardness — not merely diagrammatically as it is now being presented to you. They require the involvement of the total human being if that individual wants to make one or the other a vocation. In our present civilization therapy has left behind the spiritual element, and theology has left behind the concrete world. In our present civilization therapy has taken a false path into materialism and theology a false path into abstraction. For these reasons their true relationship has become completely veiled. This true relationship must be reestablished. It must become active again.

For priests and physicians to work in concert with a human being who needs their respective care, each must be ready to observe a lighting up of the spirit, but from a different perspective.

[page 25, italics added] For all processes in the human organism are spiritual. For diagnosing, and still more for treatment, physicians need an observation that is trained to see *the lighting up of the spirit within the physical*. Priests need an observation that is trained to see *the lighting up of the physical reflection of a spiritual event*. There is a polarity again. But there must always be polarities working together in this world, and these are no exception.

Medical science today only understands the human body by its physical body. The physical body without the etheric, astral, or Ego bodies is but a corpse on a medical examiner's table. It is pale, lifeless, and cold. Only the mineral aspects of the human being remains and only for a few days before it begins to decompose. Physicians dissect such

corpses in anatomy and are taught to examine their patients as though they were corpses. Perhaps that's why doctors so often ask their patients to "Keep still." They act as though motion were a bad thing in a human being instead of an indication of living organism. They treat the heart as a pump that can be simply replaced with another pump if it breaks down. If you have spent much time around boat owners and car owners working on their vehicles, you may have heard them talk more affectionately about their yacht or Bugatti than most doctors talk about their patient on an operating table. The patient is often referred to as the disease they are there to be operated on for, "Your next two patients are the thyroid and the hernia." The patient is converted into a corpse-like state for the operation, and the operating team talks about what they are doing as if the patient weren't there(1).

But we are more than a physical body — while we are alive we have an etheric, astral, and Ego body. These additional three bodies have effects upon the physical body and are ignored at the physician's and their patient's peril.

[page 28] The human being stands before us in a physical body, which has a long evolution behind it, three preparatory stages before it became an earthly body - as described in my book, [An Outline of Occult Science](#). This earthly body needs to be understood much more than it is by today's anatomy and physiology. For the human physical body as it is today is a true image of the etheric body, which is in its third stage of development, and of the astral body, which is in its second stage, and even to a certain degree of the ego organization that humans first received on earth, which therefore is in its first stage of development.

Now, all of these stages of development are ignored by physicians who are not anthroposophically trained. How much more complex is the human being than what is studied in anatomy and physiology today. Physicians who do not know the complexities and interactions of the physical, etheric, astral, and Ego bodies will produce equivalent results as if one took precious paintings of Rembrandt to a paint-by-numbers hobbyist to be restored. One might imagine the results would not be acceptable, and an unacceptably high percentage of the paintings would have to be discarded.

Steiner gives several different examples of pathology resulting from various states of dysfunction by the four human bodies, either being too closely bound together or not bound together enough. Here is an example of what happens if the etheric body doesn't penetrate the physical body enough — the person does not have control over their limbs. We have all had the experience of a leg going to "sleep" and being unable to control it until it "wakes up" again. This is a case of a temporary leaving of the etheric body from the physical body. In cases of pathology, the etheric body (together with astral and Ego body) leaves all or parts of the physical body for long periods of time. We see in such cases various levels of retardation.

[page 32, 33] They are unable from their soul-spiritual individuality to control their physical limbs in any direction, not even in the direction of their own will. Such people pull their physical organism along, as it were, after themselves. . . . This is extreme mental retardation, and one has to think how at this stage one can bring the other bodies down into the physical organism. Here it can be a matter of educational measures, but also to a great extent of external therapeutic measures.

Steiner tells us that such people can have a vivid inner religious life which they may confess to a priest or rather criticize the priest for not expressing such a life in their sermons.

[page 33] They claim to know inner religious life more intimately than someone who speaks of it professionally; they feel contempt for the professional. They call their experience "rest in God." And you can see that the priest must find ways and means to relate to what such a person — one can say patient, or can use other terms — to what such a human being is experiencing within.

But suppose the conditions are not severe retardation, but simply that Ego body is not firmly placed in the physical body at an early stage of life, later the astral detaches itself, and then the etheric body as well. At each stage the person goes more inward and more spiritual. Soon they live completely inward.

[page 36] Much of what is taught in theology, particularly Catholic pastoral theology, is founded on what various enlightened, trained confessors have heard from certain penitents who have undergone this sequence of development.

One prominent example of such an inward person was St. Teresa of Avila. Her condition was pathological, but through help of the Church fathers, she was able to devote her time to her visions.

[page 37] Her life was not just a concern of the physician or of the priest but a concern of the entire Church. The Church pronounced her a saint after her death. This was St. Teresa. This was approximately her path.

How do we tell the difference between a crazy woman and a saint like Teresa? Steiner says we must transcend our usual categories.

[page 37] One must be prepared to go far beyond the usual category of ideas, for they lose their value. Otherwise one can no longer differentiate between a saint and a fool, between a madman and a genius, and can no longer distinguish any of the others except a dyed-in-the-wool average citizen.

Raised as a Catholic, I recall many times hearing about people with problems who prayed to the saints. Sometimes they had a special saint which they chose. Once during a torrid love affair, I chose St. Sebastian because I heard he had been martyred by being shot with arrows, which for me was Cupid's arrows, but still arrows. Nowadays the arrows which impinge on me and hurt are the ones that technological pioneers receive from the slings and bows of the outrageous fortune which accompanies some advanced high-tech electronics gear. For example, last night I bought a HD/DVD Player which came with instructions on how download new firmware instructions! I haven't even unpacked it and I'm told I may have to do some operation that I've only done on a computer, up until now. Even worse, when I unpacked the HD/DVD disk which I paid \$100 for to ensure that the new player worked, I found that the disk may not play without a firmware upgrade! Those kind of arrows are the ones pioneers get.

At the time of the amorous arrows, I mentioned to my love about St. Sebastian and she went to a Catholic Bookstore nearby and asked the guy behind the counter, "Do you have a St. Sebastian medal?" She reported that his eyes lit up, he raised his right hand with his index finger extended and said with a flourish, "If there's a *Saint*, there *must* be a medal!" Thus I came to receive my medal of Italy's patron saint, worn by Italian soldiers on the battlefield. When I got it, I told her, "Did you know that the pioneers in the covered wagons came to California with a St. Sebastian medal on the dashboard of their wagons to protect themselves from Indian's arrows?" This was a fantasy I created based on the popular St. Christopher medals and statues people used to mount on the dashboards of their automobiles to protect themselves from accidents on the highway and streets.

There is even a Saint for hopeless causes, St. Jude, and yet he is such a healing figurehead that we even had a hospital nearby named St. Jude's. Saints and their lives can be important aspects of healing and protection. Steiner talks about this aspect of saints' lives in this next passage. He discusses a process which happens when a person, who is strong enough to endure the suffering of their illness, experiences "an automatic therapy arising within from the strong etheric body". (Page 45) The ailing one returns, like St. Teresa, to a time when one's etheric body was newly formed and was the most vigorous. This begins an intense inner healing process. One swings like a pendulum from physical world to spiritual world and back, each time bringing strong healing forces into oneself and those around one.

[page 45, 46] Spiritual world — physical world — spiritual world — physical world, but experiencing the physical world as an exact opposite — such as normally human beings only experience when they are just incarnating into it. This inner process of healing, this therapy coming from the cosmos, is so intense that its effect can spread to sick people who are in the neighborhood of such people, if their illness lies somewhat in the same direction. In fact, the most wonderful cures can take place around such a person.

Indeed the influence can extend much further. In the former, better days of the church, these things were used in a careful, esoteric way. Later this degenerated to a superstitious worship of relics and belief in magic. But it is a fact that in better times of religious evolution, vivid biographies of such individuals, including their own imaginative descriptions, were given to the faithful, so that they could live through the experiences of such people in their own imagination. And it could then happen that when thoughtful pastors had the opportunity, they would simply put such a biography into the hands of someone in ordinary life whose illness was going in a certain direction. Perhaps

also they strengthened the effect by their own words, and this was able to start curative processes. Directing the sick individual's mind to the life of such a saint could have a therapeutic effect.

We can see that those who recover become sources of healing powers for those around them during their healing crisis. But we might puzzle over this question: "Why do some people get sick and die and others rebound strongly?" To understand this is to understand that each human being has a life's plan that they follow, one which they are mostly unconscious of, but one which leads them to make various key decisions in their lives. One knows some key decision is karmic-based, if one asks the person why they did it, and they say, "I haven't the foggiest idea." The stranger the decision or behavior, the more likely it is karmically based, and is a long-overdue action which must appear during this lifetime. This explains what Steiner means in the passage by "given to individuals simply through their karma." No one gives it to others, one makes the decision out of the deep reality and conscious unawareness of one's own karmic debt which is to be balanced by this decision.

[page 46, 47] Such a path as I described, given to individuals simply through their karma, will in fact take its course properly. What takes place in initiation(2) itself can be learned by studying these processes, which border so closely on the pathological. Therefore it is not unimportant for physicians to take the time to study the lives of such people. Physicians will find in them what can only be called a paradox: the healthy counterpart of a complex of pathological symptoms that they are accustomed to meet here and there in everyday life. And for physicians, that is the most beneficial thing possible: to see the healthy counterpart of a pathological condition.



Physicians with their therapeutic efforts often oppose the spiritual beings whose efforts involve creating an illness as part of furthering the karmic plan which the ill person has laid down for their life. When one understands this process fully, one is able to say in every circumstance what Robert A. Schuller recommended to his [Hour of Power](#) audience, "God is answering my prayers." What we mean by "God" is those spiritual beings operating in our lives at every moment, even when their process involves an illness which is necessary for our karmic well-being, even though it may require a temporary reduction of our physical well-being. The painting of the Angel with the Broken Vase(3) shows a live sprout growing out of a broken vessel and seems to represent the kind of interaction the spiritual beings have in our lives when we seem to be a broken vessel from the perspective of the materialistic world, but from the spiritual world, we appear as a living sprout of new life.

[page 47] One sees illness being treated not by human beings but by spiritual beings. One kind of treatment is the kind human beings evolve: that is, treatment from the aspect of the earth. It consists of restoring the previous condition through some therapy that breaks up the illness. The spiritual beings that have to do with humanity treat illness differently. They weave an illness into the fabric of karma.

We watched a Star Trek Voyager episode in which invisible aliens were making the crew sick. Captain Janeway had a weeklong migraine headache, Chakotay became suddenly old looking, and various other crew members went to sick bay, some with life-threatening illnesses. No one could see these aliens or knew of their presence on the Voyager starship. When Seven of Nine had her Borg implants adjusted by the Doctor, she could see the aliens going around the ship, hovering over members of the crew and making them sick. In particular, she saw two aliens inserting acupuncture-type needles into the places where Janeway was having her headaches. I had just finished writing my draft review of this book, and it occurred to me that what the aliens were doing is exactly what spiritual beings do as they "weave an illnesses into the fabric of karma" in our lifetime. We get migraines, perhaps, like Janeway did, and we cannot perceive the spiritual beings who are causing them. But they are real nevertheless. Of course, in the Voyager episode, they had to find a way to make the aliens

visible, discover their motives (research), and then get rid of them, a typical human reaction, but if we did the same thing to our spiritual beings to stop them weaving an illness into our karma, what would be the effect? We would never balance our karma, which is another way of saying that we would never progress into the spiritual world and would remain as reincarnated earthly beings until our death would coincide with the death of the Earth. If we, like the Voyager crew did, were to make these spiritual beings visible suddenly to everyday folks they would want to get rid of them as well, to their own detriment! Fortunately the world is such that in order to perceive these spiritual beings, one must undergo an initiation in which one comes to understand the goals and objectives of the spiritual beings and the salubrious effect of their actions on each human being's existence over thousands of years of karmic working out. It is all part of the great plan which leads us as human beings to becoming spiritual beings ourselves before the Earth dissolves away.

What is karma? Think of it as time all rolled up into a ball, a large knot, perhaps, like Alexander's Gordian Knot, which we must somehow unwind or slice through with our intuition if we are to understand all the events which happen to us in our present lifetime. The events in this lifetime could be marked by NOW on the time line, but what happens in this lifetime is influenced by lifetimes we lived and will live spread over some 3,000 years or more. Each of these lives have events which touch each other (as the balled up time line does in the graphic below) and influence decisions made in each other. Time is not the linear function we abstractly imagine it to be. Steiner asks us to imagine it instead as a thick rope, and one that is balled up into a knot.

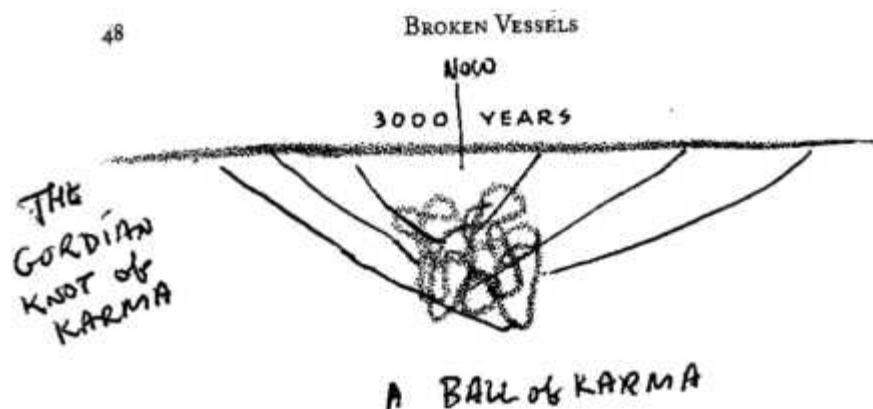
[page 47, 48] Take, for example, such a form of karma as I have been describing. Perhaps it is completely in the ordinary course of evolution in three thousand years. Let me show by this line (See drawing, page 48) that something that happens to a person today is so shaped by spiritual beings that the other part belonging

to it, the balance, the compensation, appears in three thousand years' time.

That is the normal course.

You see, in ordinary life people don't have a true knowledge of time. How do they think of it ordinarily? As a line running from past infinity through the present into the future. That is approximately how time is

imagined — and indeed, the line has to be thick — perhaps not even a line, but a thick rope, because it contains everything that is perceived at any given moment in the whole world. That's the way people think of it if they think of it at all — and most people don't think of it at all. From a spiritual point of view time is not like that. And one finds little understanding for spiritual development — which, after all, is present in all physical evolution — when time is thought of in that conventional way. In reality, time is different. The line I drew on the board can be tangled up into a ball (see drawing). The entire line of time is in that ball. Three thousand years are in that ball. Time can be all tangled up; and if it is tangled up for some development or other in evolution, then the tangle can be found in the life of some individual. In the case of St. Teresa, a tangled ball of time was present in her earthly life. We come upon a true mystery — that things that in someone's karma would seem to be widely separate for some reason become entangled.



Now we can see the challenge set before physicians and priests. Each one has to look from a different side of the world: the physician from the physical side and the priest from the spiritual side.

[page 49] You see from such an example how a study of the inner spiritual, karmic development must link up with the external pathological and therapeutic inquiry. You can see how the pastoral care of some person by priests, who are basing their view of the person on the karmic connections, the spiritual aspects, can relate to what is seen from a medical view alone. For a comprehension of

these things requires not only theoretical knowledge but really living into the things. Physicians must live into them on the pathological, physiological side that opens up for them. Priests must live into them in the theological and karmic views that open up for them. And the harmony will come from their working together out of these two different fields, not from interfering in each other's field in a dilettantish fashion.

The study of human beings requires a balance that cannot be achieved from the spirit side of the matter solely, nor from the nature side (materialistic side) solely. What is required is the most difficult thing of all: a balance point between the two. Freedom does not lie either in the spirit side of the balance nor in the nature side. Freedom only arises out of the balancing of the two. In many other places Steiner refers to the spiritual beings who would wish us to believe and focus only on the one or the other side and explains how the goal of freedom cannot be reached by us from either exclusively, but only by a balanced approach which may involve moving to one side or the other, the way a tight-rope walker does in order to reach the other side of a chasm. One cannot walk a tight-rope unless one is willing to teeter from one side to another in a dynamic balancing activity. Through such dynamic balancing we are able to find freedom in our lives, and no other way.

[page 51] And it is the same with human beings: whether you consider them from the point of view of nature or from the point of view of spirit, you do not come to freedom. Freedom lies in the middle at the point of balance between them.

That's theory, of course! In practice you have to decide when people come to you with difficult life situations whether you can make them responsible for their actions. Now this becomes a practical question: whether they can or cannot exercise free will. How are you going to decide this? You decide by judging whether their spiritual and physical constitutions are in balance. And in this the physicians and the priests are equally involved. Therefore both physicians and priests must be trained to understand the conditions under which a person is either in balance or not in balance between spirit and nature.

Whether an individual has this sense of responsibility can only be decided out of a deep knowledge of human nature. The problem of freedom in connection with responsibility is one of the deepest imaginable. We will see what from one side leads to health and from the other side leads to pathological conditions.

In Lecture 4 beginning on page 53, Steiner says that he wished to insert a chapter on anthroposophy that he felt was necessary for an "examination of healthy responsibility and pathological irresponsibility as the physician and the priest must know them."

He takes us through human development from birth to about 28 and focuses on the seven year landmarks of our lives. Every seven years we renew all the molecules of our body. That is a fact well-known to biology from some time. It explains why we must begin growing new teeth in our body as soon as we are born to replace those which were formed in our mother's womb, our baby teeth (or milk teeth) which pop out within a year of our birth. But what happens to the forces, which at seven cause our permanent teeth to pop out in our mouth, when we reach the next seven-year landmark of fourteen?

[page 58] What the human being saves by not having to create a third set of teeth (and much else that is taken care of by evolution in the same way as the teeth) enable something of the etheric body to be "left over." What flowed during the first seven years into the physical development works now purely in the realm of soul, its nature depending upon the individual. With the faculties upon which you call as a teacher in school, the faculties you train, the accomplished the great change from milk teeth to second teeth, and much else. With the forces that are saved by not having to form a third set of teeth, the child begins to develop soul faculties.

During the first septet (period of 7 years) we are under the influence of Sun forces, during the second septet of Moon forces, during the third of Sun, Moon, and Planet forces, and after the age of 21, we begin our fourth septet under the influence of the fixed stars. At twenty-eight we find ourselves at middle age pushing against what Aristotle called the crystal heaven. It is a kind of glass ceiling that all humans come up against at twenty-eight.

[page 62] Knowledge of these connections is necessary for someone concerned with the human being in health and in illness. For what do we really know of a human being, shall we say in the eleventh or twelfth year, if we don't know that the moon forces are working there? After that period, even though there are continually fewer parts to be renewed, the person must still renew them. Up to the twenty-first or twenty-second year, the sun, moon, and planets are working in succession into human growth. Then from the twenty-first to the twenty-eighth year the constellations of the fixed stars work. To be sure, this escapes ordinary observation. Only mystery wisdom tells of the entire zodiac playing into the human being between the beginning and the end of the twenties. Then the world becomes severe. It no longer wants to work into a person; it becomes harsh. Of this strange new relation of the human being to the world in the twenty-eighth, twenty-ninth year — that the world hardens toward us — of this, today's science hardly knows anything. Aristotle taught it to Alexander when he told him that we push against the crystal heaven and find it hard. Thus "the crystal heaven," beyond the sphere of the fixed stars, acquires meaning for human comprehension. And one begins to realize that when we come to the end of our twenties, we find no more forces in the cosmos for our own renewal.

The age of 28 is our midpoint, our fulcrum, "a zero moment in time when we stand between ourselves and the world." (Page 64) Think of it as the center point on the scales.

[page 64] You can carry the scales around; their relation remains the same everywhere, subject always to those mechanical laws wherever you take them — except at this point. This point is free. You can carry the point around as if it were not connected to a pair of scales: the scales remain unchanged. And so it is, when you take hold of yourself in your soul experiences at that point toward which first you strive, from which afterward you strive away: first the world is active, afterward you yourself, and *here* nothing is active. With the tendency toward and the tendency from, here where a hypomochlion (fulcrum) sits, here can live freely that human capacity which is determined neither by nature nor by the world. Here is the point of origin of human freedom. Here is where responsibility is born.

Priests and physicians can judge whether this point came too early or too late. If too early the person will have a soul which is too rigid (showing up as compulsive behaviors), if too late the person will be too rigid physically (lacking freedom of soul). In either case the person cannot be fully responsible for their actions. (Page 65)

[page 65] The physician and the priest are the ones who are competent to form this judgment, in the finest sense of the word. They will know that they can judge pretty accurately from people's appearance what their development has been, whether they are in balance, whether their life hypomochlion is at the right spot, that is, at the right point of time, or is too early or too late.

What is the state that characterizes St. Teresa of Avila and other visionaries which looks like a pathological condition, but which stays under control of a continuous healing? The Ego is strong and draws out the astral body and they remain as a set partially separate from the physical and etheric bodies. Since in our normal state of sleep, these two sets of bodies remain completely separate, these visionaries remain in a perpetual near-sleep or dream condition. They live in the realm normal people do upon awaking and going to sleep when the two sets of bodies partially separate and one can tap into the creative memories of the etheric body in consciousness (producing dreams), among other things.

[page 67] When we study these individuals, we find that as a first stage the ego organization separates from the rest of the human organism. It then draws the astral body closely to it, in a certain sense away from the physical-etheric organism. This is in the waking state. What is the consequence of this? You can easily see that this puts the individual into a kind of dream condition. From a spiritual-scientific point of view the ego, by drawing the astral body to itself, is not allowing it to enter the physical and etheric bodies completely, and this brings about a kind of dream condition. But because of the special karmic density, both ego and astral body are strong, and they bring into the dream condition receptivity for the perception of the spiritual world. Dream is transformed into a state in which the individual is really able to see into the spiritual world and to

feel the presence of spiritual beings.

On the other hand, if the Ego is weak and the astral body draws the two of them into the etheric and physical bodies, you have instead of illumination, a darkening or lowering of consciousness in such people. Rather than talking about extraordinary experiences like St. Teresa, they talk endlessly about often things that may be interesting, but otherwise of little value. You can rarely even slip in a question, and if you do, they will go off on some tangent unrelated to your question. Priests are best at understanding the St. Teresa type and physicians this other type. Here is a passage in which Steiner portrays the chief characteristics of this type of person.

[page 68, 69] Such persons, if one asks them a question, show a certain amount of stupidity, also unwillingness to answer a question. They begin to talk about something quite foreign to what one is asking. But if one catches hold of what they say about themselves — and some of them talk endlessly — one sometimes has the feeling that they possess an inner source of speech that gives them a special association of ideas such as the ordinary person does not have. They'll tell you if you let them ramble on — you mustn't ask questions, you must just snap up what they tell as it were by chance — For example a man might say: "Sure, ten years ago I was in a farmer's house and the wife gave me some coffee. The cup had red roses painted on it. She couldn't give me the coffee right away because she'd forgotten the sugar was in the kitchen and she had to go and get it. And she forgot the milk. She had to get the milk from down in the cellar. And then she poured almost half a cup of milk into the coffee. And she said, 'My coffee is very good.' And I said, 'Yes, I think so too, farmer lady.'" And so he goes on and on. He tells incidents from far in his past, and goes into the most unbelievable details. You think, "If I only had a memory as good as his!" - forgetting that if you did have as good a memory you would be just like him! Now of course I'm telling it this way to portray a type, and to show a typical outcome. You must then think of the corresponding lighter variations that you meet in life, which the physician especially meets.

Steiner goes into more detail on pages 70 and 71 about this person. They have a tendency to go wandering off somewhere every year, usually to the same region, and get very restless unless they are able to do this. They are driven by automatic will-impulses which their Ego is not able to overcome or properly direct as a result of the Ego being captured by the astral body. This type of person was apt to have been a very clever child between 7 and 14, developing then attributes that should not appear until post-puberty.

[page 71] The astral body should only be drawing the ego down after puberty, so that then the ego can completely unfold by the beginning of the twenties. With these children the astral body has already drawn the ego down after the change of teeth or in the ninth, tenth, eleventh year. We observe the abnormal cleverness and are delighted by it. By the time the late teens come, the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth years, the ego is stuck too deeply in the astral body.

This condition may progress in time to epileptic seizures due to the Ego, astral, and etheric bodies being drawn so tightly into the physical body. These will not show up until the late teens or early twenties.

[page 72, 73] Then we have the second stage, the drawing down of the ego and astral organization by the etheric body. The individual snaps too strongly with the ego, astral body, and etheric body into the physical organism, and the physical organism is not able to receive them into its single organs. Every possible organ has excess astrality that could not unite properly with the organ. . . . And conditions appear that always appear when a physical or etheric organ is flooded by the astral body and ego organization and they cannot unite so that it could be called a proper saturation of the physical body by the etheric and astral bodies. Something is left over in the physical organs from the higher members of the organism. What in the other type of individuals poured into visions similar to a sense perception, with colors like a sense perception, visions that revealed the spiritual world, is in this case pouring itself inward, wanting to seize a physical organ. In the former situation there was a reaching out more externally, to the spiritual world beyond the sense world. In this case there is a reaching inward to a physical organ, manifesting in so-called "seizures," all the different forms of real epilepsy or epileptoid symptoms ("temporal lobe seizures"). It can be explained as the

snapping down of the ego and astral organization too strongly into the physical organism, which then succeeds in drawing the etheric body to itself. We see how the first condition advances to this second condition.

This condition may progress onward to a third and extreme condition which leads to mental retardation, idiocy, or paranoia. Steiner explains that there is no such thing as congenital mental retardation.

[page 76] There is only karmic mental retardation, related to the child's entire destiny. We will also speak about this more fully, so that you will see how an incarnation spent in such mental dullness can, under certain conditions, even have a beneficial place in a human being's karma, although it may mean misery in that one incarnation.

An unhealthy pedagogy, such as found in the Froebel kindergartens of Steiner's time, is one that is *not* taken from life, but from the intellect. That pretty well describes our public school pedagogy in the United States today. How else might one describe detailed lessons plans, teachers reading from a prescribed curriculum text to their classes, and regimented tests orchestrated at the State and Federal level to apply to all students? These are definitely unknown in the healthy pedagogy of the Waldorf School systems designed by Steiner and now becoming available all over the globe.

[page 77] We have seen how much of the pedagogy of former decades that a healthy pedagogy, such as the Waldorf school pedagogy wants to be, must definitely oppose. Yet these things have become extraordinarily precious to people. Sometimes our Waldorf school education must address certain things with tremendous severity, for instance, the Froebel kindergarten work, which is taken not from life but out of the intellect. Before the change of teeth it occupies children with activities that are not an imitation of life but are invented out of people's heads. This is putting into the child's first years of life something that should not be there until the next period, between change of teeth and puberty. This brings on the first stage of a pathological condition, a mild state of illness that often is not yet regarded as pathological. Also it were better, perhaps, not to label it pathological, otherwise so much else would have to be labeled pathological, which must in any case be recognized as "cultural phenomena." These things cannot merely be criticized, they must be understood, so that one relates to them in the right way.

There was a time when the source of all illnesses was sought in sin, when the spiritual world was thought to be the source of the things of the physical world. Remove what was wrong with a person spiritually and what was wrong physically will go away. Certainly one can find many instances which demonstrate in stories in the Bible. A demon is cast out of a person and they are no longer ill.

[page 82] In the course of human evolution a complete reversal has taken place in the conception of illness. This became particularly obvious at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. If you go back two thousand years or so to the early times of the Old Testament, you find a universal conviction that illness comes from sinfulness, that illness has its original spiritual cause in sin. This was a serious belief. There had to be a spiritual error or failure somewhere as the true cause when a physical illness appeared. This idea was carried further. It was believed of a person in wh(om) the spiritual fault lay causing the illness, that the individual harbored some elemental spiritual force that did not belong there, that somehow the person was "possessed." In those times all illness signified that a person was "possessed" by some spiritual entity as the consequence of spiritual error or fault. Therapy was created accordingly. It was based on finding the means to bring out of the ill person the alien elemental spirituality that had entered through a spiritual offense. Basically this was the belief: that one does not understand an illness unless one knows its cause.

But in modern times, that belief has fallen aside, to be replaced by whatever the newest theory or technology suggests. In the nascent twenty-first century, that would be genetics and genetic engineering. All diseases are deemed to have some genetic basis and with the results of the human genome project, our medical scientists seek the one gene which is the cause of every disease. Have you noticed how many deeds people do today which were formerly considered sinful or

immoral and today are considered due to some genetic defect or medical condition? Whereas before, sin was deemed to cause illness, now illness seems to cause sin ! Has anyone ever considered seriously that the whole human rational process of assessing blame is wrong? The truth seems to be deeper than either direction to which one can assign a cause-effect relationship.

[page 82, 83] Now consider the belief that came later, pronouncing exactly the opposite view — before psychoanalysis intervened in such a frightfully dilettantish fashion. The new belief said that every sin can be traced to illness. People were convinced of it. If there was a criminal, a "sinner" somewhere (the concept "sin" was defined rather superficially, according to the legal code) they saw to it that in some way or other they got hold of the brain after death, and could thus examine the physical organism. They were looking for the defects. And they did find defects in many instances. In this respect they have advanced quite a little. Clever, well-trained scientists have adopted the view that a person who has a perfect physical organism doesn't sin. A person sins if there is some bodily defect. Sin comes from disease. That's how evolution goes — not in a straight line but by way of opposites. And the people who have now reached this last view (not everyone today admits to it, but it is often fundamental even for those who do not totally subscribe to it) look back with pity to olden times when it was believed that illness comes from sin. For they know they themselves are right, that sin comes from illness. And they know with absolute certainty that in the sick person there is some material process or other that they have to combat, have to neutralize, have to get out of the organism. In earlier times the healers worked to remove a host of elemental spirits. To someone who sees the matter from a broader point of view there is really not very much difference. From an inner standpoint there is no great difference between the health spas that materialistic medicine considers correct and Lourdes. In the latter a person is cured through religious beliefs, in the former through materialistic beliefs. These things must simply be looked at without prejudice.

In other words, it's belief *all the way down!* No matter whether one is religious or materialistic, one's beliefs govern how one might be cured or healed. Naturally the materialistic scientists do not accept that their views are beliefs, but their arguments that their views are true are on as thin an ice as the religious persons are.

One should not think that Rudolf Steiner is against materialistic science. He makes that clear in his autobiography and repeats his position at appropriate time in his various lectures. In these Pastoral Medicine lectures he emphasizes it again to this audience of priests and physicians.

[page 94, 95] Through my whole life there has been one foremost characteristic — you will find it mentioned in my autobiography.⁹ I can only describe it as the greatest possible respect for modern natural science. My respect has never changed. Never at any time would I have criticized in a trivial sense — which would be so easy to do — what natural science was bringing forward, whether in the field of external chemical, of mechanical or physical research, or of medicine. And yet at the same time evolution stood there before my eyes as a spiritual vision. And the need arose to bring what was opening up for me spiritually - for instance, the Atlantean time, or the Lemurian time, or something still further back, or further forward — to bring that into harmony with what natural science was giving out. This has not been too difficult with what natural science says about the immediate present. But when it begins to exceed its bounds, to "go wild," when it advances hypotheses that reach from the present age to a time lying far in the past, we encounter the most severe conflicts if we want to bring what we have seen spiritually into harmony with what science is saying. We come into conflict with science just when we would like to be in accord with it. Spiritual science would never choose to be in disagreement with natural science. For surely one would not be so unintelligent as to oppose facts! All the more, then, one comes into conflict with opinions. As long as natural researchers talk, that is good. As soon as they begin writing, they really "go wild," and then one can no longer go along with what they say. This is a serious situation, and it must be reckoned with by anyone who has to relate in any way to what modern science is able to give.

For examples of scientists who "go wild", one can take a hard look at the phenomena of "acid rain" and "global warming." If acid rain is not familiar to you, perhaps you are under thirty and were watching cartoons as a child

instead of news programs warning about how the forests of the world were being killed off by industrial emissions. Here we are thirty years later and our forests are as vibrant as ever. What happened? Research eventually showed that the advocates of acid rain had simply gone wild exactly as Steiner describes above. They were mis-interpreting what was a simply natural phenomenon about which humans had no effect whatsoever on. So acid rain disappeared from the headlines and nightly news programs, only to be replaced in our time by "global warming" and all the ills that new phenomenon caused by industrial emissions is going to cause our planet. And yet, only thirty years ago, *Newsweek Magazine* had a cover showing the "New Ice Age" which would be upon us shortly! Scientists of the 1970s were extrapolating their data and concluding it showed falling temperature and therefore an ice age was coming. Today, equally ardent and assiduous scientists are looking at new data and forecasting the *exact* opposite future for the world. Do these three examples not show cases of scientists "gone wild" instead of the world gone wild?

Not only do our scientists go wild in their predictions, but their abstract logic and reasoning based solely upon sensory-observable data can never explain the origin of life, much less reach the level of understanding the human being which stands at the pinnacle of all life forms on Earth.

[page 93] Natural science simply does not reach as far as the human being. Human beings have a soul nature and a spiritual nature, and do not have just a physical organism with physical processes that can be investigated externally — even to such phenomena as those of aerodynamics or thermodynamics. We also have living in us our karma from earlier earth-lives; we see it manifesting in our personality. . . . But there is no possibility of exploring such connections if we only have the means of modern science at our disposal.

What is the solution? We as human beings who have made extraordinary advances in controlling our material environment and well-being using materialistic science must now begin to understand the spiritual aspects which underlie our material world as well. Steiner brings to us his spiritual science to augment our physical science.

[page 95] We must indeed advance to a new level. We must begin from the side of spiritual science to look at what manifests as external human processes and relate them to what we see as spiritual processes. We will be going in the right direction, for instance, if, holding fast to the physiology of breathing and circulation as we already know it from current natural science, we proceed further to examine how physical life is connected with spiritual life.

When we breathe we take in more than just molecules of air, but also forces of the cosmos of which humans once knew about, but modern science blithely ignores, to its own peril and ours, up until now. Steiner was born with an ability to perceive the spiritual aspects of our breathing and he shares it with us here. Just as we cannot perceive nano-second pulses of electricity which powers our computers, but we believe they exist when the technician adjusts them to over-clock our CPUs to give us a faster computer. The very senses a scientist uses for his work, seeing and hearing, rightly understood, operate like limbs which shoot out from the breathing in of light and warmth.

[page 98, 99] We can perceive the following process: The cosmic warmth enters the human organism by way of breathing. But not only warmth. The warmth carries with it light, macrocosmic chemism, an macrocosmic life, vitality. Light ether, chemical ether, and life ether from the macrocosm are carried by the inhalation of warmth into the human organism. The element of warmth carries light, as well as the chemical and life elements, into the human being, and gives them over to the air-inhalation process. This entire process, which lies over the air-breathing process and which appears as a refined (or even metamorphosed) breathing process, is not studied today in a real sense. It is lacking entirely from physiology — well, a bit of it falls into physiology and works there as a foreign body. This is an example of how one gets nowhere if one works separately from the spirit on one side and from nature on the other. It is something entirely foreign to the physiology of the senses as the latter is commonly presented, with the various senses — seeing, hearing, sensation of warmth — totally differentiated. In reality, they are only the limbs, the outer shoots of this other process that, to begin with, is the taking-in of warmth and with it light, chemism, and life.

A scientist who does not understand the mysteries that comprise the human being can be fooled into thinking, like Dr.

Frankenstein, that it is possible to build a human being from its component parts. Steiner uses an elaborate metaphor of building a house to help us understand this matter.

[page 100] The physiology of the senses has gathered tremendous treasures from all sides, but it is like a man who has collected the most excellent building materials for a beautiful house and carries them to a place and arrange them in an enormous pile, but then he can't build the house. He can't possibly build the house. Everything that occurs in the senses has been gathered together and arranged in a great pile, but no work starts. To start the work, what goes on inside the human being has to be added to what has already been researched externally. Inquiry must be made into the process of the finer breathing that takes place in the etheric and astral bodies. From there one can go on to build the house. Naturally, when the house can be built one would be a fool to say: The first thing we have to do is to get rid of this great pile of building materials lying here. We will certainly not say that. Now that it is all there, we can begin to build the house.

Steiner builds his own spiritual science upon all the science of the senses has to offer and goes further to include all that his own supersensible sight has to offer. Just as our technician used his instruments to measure the nano-second pulses to adjust our computer, Steiner uses his vision to perceive spiritual realities which lie in our processes of circulation and breathing to help us understand how our human body works and interfaces with the forces of the cosmos in which all of us are embedded.

[page 100, 101] It would be just as foolish to do what many people do today who look at things in a dilettantish way — that is, criticize natural science from the ground up and reject it. It does not have to be rejected. Every piece of the building material can be used, it is all valuable, and there will be a fine result if all that is given out today by the physiology of the senses is used. But as it is now, it is just a pile of material. So we, can say: We extend our view from what takes place in ordinary breathing as the continuous creation of present-day human beings to the finer breathing process that takes place higher up in the element of warmth, into which the entire cosmic etheric world plays. That is what we see if we study the upper human being.

The details of the exhalation process involves the lower human being and the element which the ancient people called "earth" as part of the four elements of fire, air, water, and earth. The ancient wisdom which scientists make sport of today contained deep knowledge of the spiritual workings of the human being which Steiner helps us to recover and assimilate today.

[page 101] Just as what breathing takes in of nerve-sense spirit activity becomes inner activity, so what remains behind of inner activity from exhalation becomes the sum of forces forming metabolism. The metabolism is active in the element that in earlier epochs was called earth, the name for everything in the human organism that tends toward solidity.

We humans carry within us a light organism that thinks, a chemical organism that feels, and a metabolic organism that wills. Steiner arrives at this by following the breathing process.

[page 102] So if we follow the process from above to below, we have light coming in by way of the warmth ether, and then coming to a stop. Where the breathing enters, it comes to a "stop!" for the light. The light spreads itself out. It is not carried farther by the human organism; it can spread out as light. We carry within us a pure light organism, a light organism that thinks.

We follow the process farther inward to where inhalation borders on exhalation, and we find the chemism is carried in to that point through the nerve-sense process. Now the chemism comes to a stop. It is an inner chemism, a chemical organism in us that feels.

Now let us go down further to where exhalation leaves the digestive-metabolic process behind - not the external metabolic process of food consumption, but the inner metabolic activity. There it is "stop!" for the life ether. The life ether forms a human organism that wills. Thus thinking, feeling, and willing come about.

Our lymph is blood in the process of forming — it doesn't contain any red corpuscles. In the lymph new karma is

forming. So much that influences a person's life and subsequent karmic working out comes about because of anger. What do we say when a person is angry? His blood is rising. She is beet red with anger. One gets angry and relationships change, perhaps for a lifetime.

[page 104] A change in the blood can merely mean anger. On the other hand, what piles up there because the past is not allowed down into the venous process leads to actions that bring about the shaping of karma.

What the lymph does not allow to go over into the blood gathers deep in the subconscious. It forms a seed in the subconscious, a seed that we carry out with us through the gate of death when we throw off our physical body. It is the karma-to-be, the karma still to be developed.

Above, in the breathing process one perceives the karma that comes out of the past. Below the exhalation, in the circulation where the lymph has not yet become blood, one sees the latent karma. It stays in the lymph. So one can say that karma flows into the human arterial process and stays behind; the venous process is formed and karma comes into being again. We have here the borderline where karma begins to pile up in the nerve-sense-arterial process.

Below, corresponding to the process that goes from lymph to veins, we have incoming karma. When we look with spiritual eyes at the lymph that has not yet become blood, we see outgoing karma. Thus we have the connection between physical and spiritual. Above, the human being qualitatively comes close to the spiritual and touches karma. In between, the present life is dammed up. Below, in the lymph not yet become blood, we see the new karma arising, beginning to be formed. Between past karma and karma that is forming, in between stands the human earth-life, which — looked at from this point of view — is a damming-up between the two. Thus we can follow the procedure right into the physical process.

There is much more in these lectures than can be covered in a review, but which require a careful study of the entire set of lectures together with the study of the rest of the material Steiner presented on Pastoral Medicine. Since each one of us carries a priest and a physician of sorts inside of us, we would do well to read and study this material. If one of our family is ailing, it would be well for us to recognize whether the situation calls for a priest or a physician, a theologian or a medical doctor. Or perhaps both.

As human beings we are born "broken vessels" which are held together by the forces of the universe for 28 years after which we must take over the holding-together effort. We must learn to balance our four essential human bodies: physical, etheric, astral, and Ego so one body does not penetrate further into the others than is healthy for us both spiritually and physically. We must learn to balance spirit and nature, heaven and earth, not as some fixed perfection which never varies, but as a tight-rope walker or a bicycle rider does, by accepting the necessity of swaying first to one side and then to the other as a part of a successful passage along one's path.

If we lose our balance, we must ever remember our Guardian Angels whose guidance will help us to regain that balance in the moment we ask, if not before. In a world in which the presence of a personal angel to help and guide each one of us may seem far-fetched simply because so few people profess to have one. Truth is, most people forgot about their personal angel as they grow up in the world. And their angel, if ignored and forgotten for long enough, will give up upon them, thus bringing into reality the very expectation of the individual who ignored their Guardian Angel for so long. What's the proof of the existence of one's Guardian Angel? These angels operate within one to help one make good decisions. The answer and proof of their existence lies ever in the life that one lives and the decisions that one makes every day. Test this proof in your life, if you are skeptical and let your own experience prove it to you.



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

Footnote 1. I wonder if this still goes on, in face of recent data that patients remember what their surgery team talked about during their surgery.

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**Footnote 2.** By "initiation" here Steiner is referring to the process of learning to see into the spiritual worlds into which people are inducted in so-called Mystery Schools over the ages. Steiner's work, rightly understood, is to make exoteric (public and visible) and scientifically understood what was hitherto hidden behind the esoteric curtain of the Mystery Schools and their ilk.

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Footnote 3. Maureen Bayhi's "Angel and Broken Vase" painting, acrylic on board, owned by, and Photo Copyright 2007 by Bobby Matherne.

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