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A READER'S JOURNAL

**The Tension Between East and West, GA#83
10 Lectures in Vienna, June 1-11, 1922**

by

Rudolf Steiner

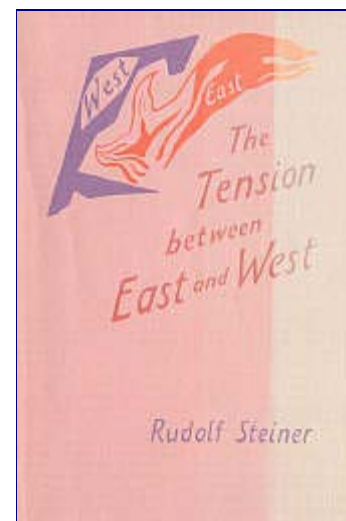
Introduction by Owen Barfield

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Chapter: Spiritual Science



Anyone reading this book today has the benefit

of an Introduction which gives a fine overview of Steiner's lectures from the perspective of Owen Barfield, some forty years after the lectures were given. It was Barfield who led me initially to read deeply into Rudolf Steiner's works; I was impressed by his respect for how Steiner illuminated Barfield's own view of the importance of understanding the evolution of human consciousness(1).

Barfield sees the "tension between East and West" not just as a stagnant polarity but as a living *tertium quid*, a "vibrant tension" between the two. (Page 7)

[page 8, Barfield] To understand anything in depth involves some knowledge of how it came into being, and here the attempt is made to view the relation between typically Eastern and typically Western modes of consciousness in the light of the whole process of the evolution of human consciousness. In this Rudolf Steiner was up against the difficulty that the very existence of such a process was then — and it is still today — not generally recognized. That this is surprising "in an age permeated with evolutionary concepts" has recently been pointed out by Mr. Charles Davy, in his book *Towards a Third Culture*, in the course of which he defines the evolution of consciousness as "a constant-direction change in the normal experience of the perceived world".

Fifty years after Barfield wrote these words, there is as yet little understanding of the importance of the evolution of human consciousness outside of scholars immersed in Barfield and Steiner's works. Absence this understanding, it is no surprise that most scholars today project modern concepts onto previous ages as if human consciousness back then were identical to today's consciousness. By doing this, scientists of today, who claim to be materialists, dealing only with observations of what they call the *real world*, have no idea how they have left their moorings and drifted into the *very world* they claim does not exist, the *spiritual world*. Barfield outlines the problem materialists face today and show how spiritual science is making advances using cognition directly, examining spiritual areas that materialists claim do not exist and avoid even attempting to examine. To make claims and avoid investigation of those claims is a very unscientific approach, yet few materialistic scientists are aware of their self-generated paradox. Barfield criticizes the schools of materialism for this salient failing which accompanies their proven successes.

[page 10, 11, Barfield] If we look aside for a moment from their proven efficacy in the field of straightforward physical manipulation and consider rather their claim

(abandoned now altogether in some quarters) to furnish us with knowledge about the nature of man and the world, it must be admitted that the matter dealt with by the established sciences is coming to be composed less and less of actual observations, more and more of such things as pointer-readings on dials, the same pointer-readings arranged by electronic computers, inferences from inferences, higher mathematical formulae and other recondite abstractions. Yet modern science began with a turning away from abstract cerebration to objective observation! And this is the very step which spiritual science claims to be taking again today. Once grant the possibility that observations other than those made with the passive and untrained senses are possible, and you have to admit that the method of cognition which Steiner describes is more scientific, because more empirical, than the method of the schools.

When Steiner turned his understanding of the evolution of consciousness on the social situation, he achieved his *fifteen minutes of fame* on the world stage in the 1920s with his Threefold Commonwealth⁽²⁾ which was urgently promoted as a solution to the problems of post-World War I Europe. Had Steiner's plan been adopted, one could not imagine an Adolf Hitler ever coming to prominence to lead Germany into a second and more devastating defeat in World War II. By controlling all three folds of the State, Hitler used his abstract principles to lead the political, religious, and economic sectors of Germany with a monomaniacal fury which burnt itself out in a dozen years. Kept separate from each other as Steiner outlined, these three sectors could have led to a sustained and peaceful growth of Germany and its neighboring countries in Europe.

[page 13, Barfield] Once again all turns on the basic fact of the evolution of human consciousness. On the one hand such an evolution necessarily involves changes in the social structure, but on the other hand that structure, and the changes which it demands, cannot be understood except in the light of that evolution. In the long run the views on diet of a man who had never heard of bread would be about as practical as the views on social reform of a man who is unaware that humanity is evolving from a typically oriental condition, in which the existence of the individual is latent in society, to a typically occidental one, in which the existence of society is latent in the individual.

Barfield says the reader will be disappointed if he seeks a panacea for the ills of society in these lectures by Steiner, but *not* if he approaches the lectures with an open mind.

[page 13, 14, Barfield] But it may be otherwise if with an open mind he travels through these pages expecting only what he will find: a patient examination into the way in which we form our ideas and the historical and geographical factors by which that way is conditioned, and, along with that, a preliminary contribution towards the unfreezing of certain hidden reserves of energy, imagination and wit, which would seem to be essential if human civilization is to be rescued from decline.

When learning something new, it's best to know all about it before you start, and Barfield has laid down the plan for what we can expect as we work our way through these amazing insights and thoughts that Rudolf Steiner shared with an audience of 2,000 in Vienna about ninety years ago, insights that speak yet to us today as fresh as if they were spoken only yesterday.

In the first lecture, Steiner takes on the paradox of *homo sapiens* of today, the *wise man* or *man the thinker* who looks unwisely upon thinking as an un-reality, up until now. Incurring this paradox are humans today, scientists in particular, who while using their thinking processes to investigate the natural world, exclude thinking as a process to be investigated, relegating thinking thereby to merely a tool for comprehending reality while excluding thinking from being a part of reality itself. One cannot ponder this paradox too much, as the fruits which can flow from this such pondering are many and useful, as Steiner explains in his writings and lectures elsewhere, while focusing directly upon the paradox itself in this lecture. The

result of the paradox, he points out, is that most scientists today relegate thinking to a superficial semblance of a natural process, and do not recognize it as the real natural process which represents the height of human abilities and is responsible for the greatest human achievements.

Let us follow his thinking as he lays out how this comes to be.

[page 17, 18] Today, we are virtually obliged simply to accept the data given us by observation and experiment, and to work them up into natural laws, as they are called. Admittedly, to do so we make use of thought; but we make use of it only as a means of arranging phenomena so that through their own existence they manifest to us their inner connection, their conformity to law. And we make it our duty not to add any of our own thought to our observation of the world. We see this, indeed, as an ideal of the scientific attitude — and rightly so.

Under these conditions, what has become of human thinking? It has actually become the servant, the mere tool of research.

Steiner follows the processes of scientific thought and comes to the conclusion that thinking "is condemned to be a mere semblance, not a reality." Note that this is precisely *not* Steiner's view of thinking, but rather the view which modern scientific thinking creates using thinking as its tool. He asks the crucial question and then answers it:

[page 18] How can we, from the standpoint of scientific law, understand thinking as a manifestation of the human organism? And to this, if we stand impartially and seriously within the life of science, we can only reply to day: To the extent that thinking has had to withdraw from the natural processes, contemplation of them can go on trying to encompass thinking, but it cannot succeed. Since it is methodologically excluded, thinking is also really excluded from the natural processes. It is condemned to be a mere semblance, not a reality.

Do you, dear Reader, see the paradox yet? You are a thinking being, are you not?⁽³⁾ If you do not see the paradox, perhaps you sense that something is not right when you hear of thinking being treated as a semblance of reality and not a natural process in a human being, not being treated as *the very hallmark of what it means to be a human being*. That is Steiner's point.

[page 18, 19] Only as thinking beings can we regard ourselves as human; it is in thinking that we find our human dignity — and yet this, which really makes us into human beings, accompanies us through the world as something whose reality we cannot at present acknowledge, as a semblance. In pointing to what is noblest in our human nature, we feel ourselves to be in an area of non-reality.

Yet there is another paradox which confronts us: the semblance nature of thinking leads us to freedom, because its image nature cannot compel us as a natural force would. Following this line of thinking led Steiner to write his classic work, [The Philosophy of Freedom](#).

[page 19] Whilst in this respect science would appear to lead to something negative for the life of the soul, yet — and this brings me to my second paradox — on the other hand it has resulted in something extremely positive. Here, I express once more a paradox that struck me particularly when, more than twenty years ago now, I worked out my [Philosophy of Freedom](#) and attempted, whilst maintaining a truly scientific outlook on life, to fathom the nature of human freedom.

While science would seem to lead to a denial of human freedom, its theories produce the opposite effect because science treats thinking as a semblance, which acts like an image in a mirror and cannot compel us, but allows us to act in freedom.

[page 20] Existent forces can compel me, whether they are thought of as existing outside me or inside me; images cannot compel me. If, therefore, I am able to conceive my moral impulses within that pure thinking which science itself fosters in us by its methods; if I can so shape moral impulses within me that my attitude to their shaping is that to which science educates me, then in these moral impulses conceived by pure thinking I have, not compelling forces, but forces and semblances that I myself am free to accept or not. That is to say: however much science, from its very premises, is bound, and with some justification, to deny freedom, yet in educating him to semblance thinking it educates the man of our culture to freedom.

In many places Steiner has cautioned against the use of techniques used by ancients to reach higher knowledge, such as yoga. In this lecture he expands this advice to explain how the yogis of olden times were using their patented yoga breathing exercises to allow them to become us! In other words, what they achieved by breathing regimens was to acquire a way of understanding the world that was still millennia away from becoming a common human capability. The yogi learned to breathe and think in the way we do today which, for his time, was an extraordinary achievement for the common person.

[page 22] When nowadays we examine our breathing, we find that it is a process which for the most part operates unconsciously in the healthy human organism. There must be something abnormal about the man who is aware of his breathing. The more naturally the process of breathing functions, the better it is for ordinary consciousness and for ordinary life.

The physiology of breathing is natural and thus fully unconscious to us today, but the yogis of old had to consciously create that process in themselves in order to understand the world the way we do today.

[page 23] When we breathe in, the respiratory impulse enters our organism; but it also goes via the spinal cord into the brain. There, the rhythm of the respiratory current combines with those processes that are the physical carriers of mental activity, the nerve and sense processes. Actually, in our ordinary life, we never have nerve and sense processes alone; they are always permeated by our respiratory rhythm. A connection, interaction, harmonization of the nerve and sense processes and of respiration always occurs when we allow our minds to function. By transmitting his altered respiratory rhythm into the nerve and sense process in a fully conscious way, the yogi also made a conscious connection between the respiratory rhythm and the thought rhythm, logical rhythm or rather logical combination and analysis of thoughts. In this way he altered his whole mental activity. In what direction did he alter it? Precisely because his breathing became fully conscious, his thoughts permeated his organism in the same way as did the respiratory current itself. We could say that the yogi set his thoughts moving on the respiratory currents and, in the inner rhythm of his being, experienced the union of thought and breath. In this way, the yoga scholar raised himself above the mass of his fellow-men and was able to proclaim to them knowledge they could not gain for themselves.

What was the essence of this knowledge the yogis gained over his fellows? He created an inner self or "I am" for himself. People of his time, lacking an inner self were *congruent* with what "lives and moves and acts" in the universe (Page 24), while we today, with our evolved inner self, are *meta* to these things. People of his time saw the external colors of objects infused with spiritual colors and spiritual beings, while we today see only pure colors radiated from the surface of objects. People of his time saw colors coming from inside of humans mixed with the colors from the surface which revealed how people were feeling directly, while we today only see colors and features from the surface of humans and must judge from this data how people are feeling within themselves.

Everyone has seen the old man on the mountain who is visited by someone who wishes to receive the

sage's advice. Why did such sages have to go to the mountain top and stay there?

[page 25] At that time, it was generally accepted that one had to retire into solitude and a hermit's life if one sought connection with supersensible worlds. And anyone who carried out such exercises did condemn himself to solitude and the life of the hermit; for they bring a man into a certain state of sensibility and make him over-sensitive towards the robust external world. He must retire from life. In earlier times it was just such solitary figures who were trusted by their fellow-men. What they had to say was accepted as knowledge.

A good friend of mine confided in me several decades ago that he was planning to go to the Himalayan mountains and live alone in a cave. Thinking back, I wish I'd had this knowledge to share with him, but lacking it, I still sensed instinctively that it would be better for him to create a cave in a room in the middle of civilization to create the alone time he needed while continuing to work among people. Today he is a trusted consultant and speaker around the world.

[page 25] Nowadays, this no longer suits our civilization. People today rightly demand that anyone they are to trust as a source of knowledge should stand in the midst of life, that he should be able to hold his own with the robustness of life, with human labor and human activity as the demands of the time shape them. The men of today just do not feel themselves linked, as the men of earlier epochs did, to anyone who has to withdraw from life.

Exactly as a hermitic life is inappropriate for humans today, so, too, is an ascetic life inappropriate. It is inappropriate for someone to undergo various ascetic regimens of sensory and nutritional deprivation to learn of the presence of the spiritual world. All one will find by such ascetic exercises is that one's normal bodily functions mask the spiritual world from one's view and cognition today. Steiner's exercises allow one to live in the midst of people (he gave this lecture in Vienna to an audience of 2,000 people), and remain healthy while creating spiritual muscles or organs which allow one to view the spiritual world in full consciousness.

[page 26] What makes our physical and sensuous organism suited for the life between birth and death is precisely the fact that, as the ascetics' experiences were able to show, it hides from us the spiritual world. It was, quite simply, the experience of the early ascetics that by damping down the bodily functions one could consciously enter the spiritual worlds. That again is no way for the present. Anyone who inhibits his body in this way makes himself unfit for life among his fellow men, and makes himself unfit *vis-à-vis* himself as well. Life today demands men who do not withdraw, who maintain their health and indeed restore it if it is impaired, but not men who withdraw from life. Such men could inspire no confidence, in view of the attitude of our age. Although the path of asceticism certainly did lead to knowledge in earlier times, it cannot be a path for today.

In yoga the processes of respiration and thinking merge together; in Steiner's method(4) the processes of respiration and thinking are kept separate. His method involves placing "certain readily comprehended concepts at the center of our consciousness" and remaining with the thought. With practice, we build up a spiritual muscle which becomes an organ of super-sensible or spiritual sight, and all the while we remain conscious.

[page 27] Today, then, we go straight to thinking, by cultivating meditation, by concentrating on certain subjects of thought for longish periods. We perform, in the realm of the soul, something comparable to building up a muscle. If we use a muscle over and over again in continuous exertion, whatever the goal and purpose, the muscle must develop. We can do the same with thinking. Instead of always submitting, in our thinking, to the course of external events, we bring into the center of our consciousness,

with a great effort of will, clear-cut concepts which we have formed ourselves or have been given by someone expert in the field, and in which no associations can persist of which we are not conscious; we shut out all other consciousness, and concentrate only on this one subject. In the words Goethe uses in *Faust*, I might say: *Yes, it is easy — that is, it appears so — yet the easy is difficult.* One person takes weeks, another months, to achieve it. When consciousness does learn to rest and rest continually upon the same content, in such a way that the content itself becomes a matter of complete indifference, and we devote all our attention and all our inward experience to the building up and spiritual energization of mental activity, then at last we achieve the opposite process to what the yogi went through. That is, we tear our thinking away from the process of respiration.

"This is the first step towards a way of knowledge suited to modern man," Steiner says on page 28. We are led into a vibrant way of viewing life and the world which our ordinary abstract logical mode of thinking is not able to perform. It is the difference between observing a body on a table in the morgue and watching a ballet dancer in Swan Lake.

[page 28] From abstract, dead thinking, from mere semblance thinking, our thinking becomes a vitalized thinking. This is the significant transition that can be made from abstract and merely logical thinking to a vital thinking which we clearly feel is capable of shaping a reality, just as we recognize our process of growth as a living reality.

This vitalized thinking should not be confused with any of the former clairvoyant arts; rightly understood, it is a new modern clairvoyance. The yogi strove inward to reach his self, his "I am"; but Steiner allows us to move outward to reach the "rhythm of the world."

[page 32] Today, I wished to show how, in contrast to earlier ways of knowledge, man can attain a modern supersensible way of knowledge. The yogi sought to move into the human substance and reach the self; we seek to move out to the rhythm of the world. The ancient ascetic would *depress* the body in order to *express* spiritual experience and allow it to exist independently. The modern way of knowledge does not incline to asceticism; it avoids all arts of castigation and addresses itself intimately to the very life of the soul.

While the ways of the yoga and ascetic drew men away from life, the modern way of Steiner places men directly inside of life. Vitality thinking is like a higher kind of mathematics, a higher *mathesis* which allows us to experience the forces of life and our inner powers directly.

[page 33] Anyone who perceives this process of cognition in its entirety must conclude: things can satisfy man as knowledge and lead to a science only if they rest on something he can really experience and observe through his inner powers. With the aid of mathematics, we can penetrate into the facts and structures of the inanimate world; but we cannot move more than a little way at most, and that somewhat primitively, into the organic world. We need a way of looking as exact as that of mathematics with which to penetrate into the higher processes of the outside world. Even one of the outstanding representatives of the school of Haeckel has expressly admitted that we must advance to an entirely different type of research and observation if we wish to move up from the inorganic into the organic realm of nature. For the inorganic, we have mathematics, geometry; for the organic, the living, we have nothing as yet that corresponds to a triangle, a circle, or an ellipse. By vital thinking we shall achieve them: not with the ordinary mathematics of numbers and figures, but with a higher mathesis, a qualitative approach working creatively, one which — and here I must say something which many people will find abominable — which touches the realm of the aesthetic.

The critics of Rudolf Steiner's approach miss the essential point that he is a scientist first, not a spiritual dilettante, and Lord knows, we have seen many of these in the past century. Rather than knock modern science and scientists, Steiner accepts their contribution to our knowledge of the physical world as something that is good, namely, something that has come in the right time for us, however, from him we can learn how to penetrate into the facts and structures of the living, animate world, something which our material sciences has few tools at its disposal to do. We, as living human beings, are more powerful than any of the tools of modern science, if we would only exercise our spiritual muscles and develop our spiritual sight.

[page 34] That is the aim of the spiritual science whose methods I have sought to describe to you today by way of introduction. It does not wish to oppose triumphant modern science, but to accept it fully in its importance and substance, just as we accept fully the external man. But just as we look through the external man at the soul, so it seeks to penetrate through natural laws, not in a lay and dilettante fashion, but with a serious approach, to the spiritual element underlying the world. And so this spiritual science seeks not to create any kind of opposition to natural science, but to be its soul and spirit.

One of the things which vital thinking allows one to do is investigate the time between death and a new birth. During this time, the outside world we know becomes dark and our inner world is illuminated for us. In this time before birth, we see the world we will enter after we are born; it is as though we form the steering currents which direct us as we wish — as we feel necessary — to our new lifetime to come.

[page 46, 47] Between birth and death it is not investigated by man with his ordinary consciousness. Exactly the opposite is true, however, of our existence before we unite with the body — our spiritual existence, in a spiritual environment. In this life on earth, the inner world is dark and the outside world of the cosmos bright and full of sound; in the purely spiritual life before our earthly embodiment, the outer cosmic world is dark, and our world is then the inner world of man. We see this inner world! And truly, it seems to us no smaller and no less majestic than does the cosmos when we see it with our physical eyes during our earthly existence. As if it were our "outside world", we come to understand the law of our spiritual inner world, and we prepare ourselves, in the spiritual realm, for dealing later with our bodily functions, with what we are between birth and death. For what we are between birth and death extends before us like a world, before we descend into this physical existence on earth.

Lest anyone call this a wild guess, Steiner spells it out clearly, "This is not speculation. It is direct perception arising from exact clairvoyance." He continues:

[page 47] It is something which, starting from this exact clairvoyance, leads us some way into the connection between the eternal element in man and the life on earth — that eternal element which remains hidden from us between birth and death, and of which we see the first gleams when we are able to perceive it in the still unembodied state. And with this we explore a part of human eternity itself. We don't even have a word in our modern languages for this part of human eternity. We rightly speak of immortality; but we ought also to speak of "unbornness". For this now confronts us as a direct experience.

What led me to eventually find Rudolf Steiner was an imagination I had decades ago that we as humans live in the middle of a riddle (life) which has an enigma at each end: the enigma of *unbornness* and the enigma of death. According to Steiner, for us to discover our unborn nature requires a training of thought; to discover our life-after-death nature requires a training of will.

[page 47] This is one aspect of exact clairvoyance, one aspect of human eternity, of the

great riddle of the human soul, and thus of the supreme problem of psychology in general. The other aspect arises from those other exercises, which I yesterday termed exercises of the will, through which we so take in hand our will that we learn to make use of it independently of the body. I explained that these exercises induce us to overcome pain and suffering within the soul, in order to make it into a "sense-organ" (to speak loosely) or a spiritual organ (to speak exactly) of vision, so that we not only look at the spiritual, but see its authentic shape. And when we learn to experience in this way outside our body, not only with our thoughts but with our will itself — that is, with our entire human substance — there appears before the soul the image of death, in such a way that we now know the nature of experience without the body: both in thinking and in willing and in what lies between, feeling. In an imaginably creative way we learn to live without the body. And in doing so we gain an image of our passage through the gate of death; we learn how in reality, too, we can do without the body and how, passing through the gate of death, we enter once more that spiritual sphere from which we descended into this bodily existence. What is eternal and immortal in us becomes not only philosophical certainty, but direct perception. By training the will, we disclose for the soul's contemplation the other side of eternity — immortality — just as unbornness is disclosed by the training of thought.

Do you wish to find your loved ones during your time between death and a new birth? Consider how difficult it is at times in this world for you to locate or to be with a loved one: they may have moved far away or otherwise be unavailable. Take heart. These impediments disappear during our time between death and a new birth. You will find your loved ones and you will even make plans for you to be together with them after your new birth. This philosophy is not some religious principle or article of faith, but is instead based on a knowledge from direct observation with vital seeing. It supports every religious faith. It supports each faith, but not the child-like fairy tales which some religious people create of an eternal life of bliss after death. It lays out a series of lifetimes on Earth inter-spaced with times in the spiritual world in which we prepare for our next life on Earth.

[page 49] On a foundation of knowledge, not of faith, we can now say: as they stride through the gate of death, men find themselves once more together. And just as the body, which impedes our sight of the spirit, disappears in the spiritual world, so too in that world every impediment to friendship and love now disappears. Men are closer together there than in the flesh. A mode of knowledge that may still appear abstract in relation to true psychology culminates in this religious feeling and vision. Yet the philosophy of life I am here presenting does not seek to infringe on religious faith. This philosophy can be tolerant; it can recognize fully the value of every individual religious faith, and even exercise it in practice; but at the same time, as a nurse to this religious life, it provides an epistemological basis for this religious life too.

One might say, "I won't believe this until I see it directly with my own eyes." To comprehend this reality requires a training equivalent to that of a painter, but to appreciate the truth and beauty of a Picasso, e.g., does not require one to be a Picasso. Likewise for seeing the truth and beauty of this philosophy.

[page 50] It therefore needs to be said over and over again: just as one does not need to be a painter to feel the beauty of a picture, so too one does not need to be a spiritual scientist oneself — although one can become one up to a point — to be able to test whether what I am saying here is true. Just as one can feel the beauty of a picture without being a painter oneself, so with ordinary common sense one can perceive what the spiritual scientist says about the soul. That one *can* see it, I think I have established all the more firmly in recognizing how souls thirst for a profounder approach to psychology and to the great riddles of existence in relation to the soul. The aim of a modern view of life such as has been outlined here today does in fact represent the desire of countless people, though they are not ordinarily aware of it; it forms the pain,

the sorrow, the privation, the wish of countless people — of all those who are serious about what we must regard as constructive forces in face of the many forces of decline present in our age.

Steiner gives us a quote from Goethe which allows each of us to consider what our relationship to the world at large should be or become at each point in our lifetime. “What is the highest and best use that we can make of our talents?” is what comes to my mind. What comes to yours?

[page 51] Goethe, who gave simply expression to so much that men find great and moving, once wrote: "Each man should consider with what part of himself he can and will influence his time!"

Man is the recorded memory of the world. This statement will be difficult for newcomers to Spiritual Science to absorb in its fullest meaning, but it will be important for each of us to comprehend the implication of this statement if we are to influence properly our own time in this world. The full human being is more than the items the medical examiner categories during an autopsy. We are rather like a radio receiver which can receive and decode the recorded memory of this cosmos, but when our transistors are fried and depowered at death, no more transmissions of this memory can be decoded by the body on the steel table of the autopsy room.

[page 89] We can therefore say: the cosmos allows us to penetrate it to gain supersensible knowledge; and what it gives back to us as a result of this penetration is precisely our knowledge of self.

In a curious arrangement of things, which makes more sense the longer we ponder it, the macrocosm of the world is mirrored in the microcosm of our human being.

[page 89, 90] We can say therefore: what is physical and sensuous without is seen as semblance within. Conversely, I would say: in attaining the capacity to look out, through the spirit-organ that is our self, into the outside world as a spiritual one, with spiritual entities and events, we perceive our own inner physical body. We learn to know the substance of our lungs, heart and other organs. The spirituality of the outside world is reflected by the physical nature within us, just as the physical outside world is reflected by our spiritual, abstract nature.

If we engorge ourselves in abstract logical thinking we might, like the idealist, regard our inner human organisms as something trivial and commonplace, instead of as an intricately complex mirror of the cosmos in we humans were firstly formed as spiritual beings and evolved into our physicality only after aeons of evolution during which our human nature evolved in synchronism with the evolution of the cosmos, by which I mean the local region of space we basely name our Solar System.

[page 90, 91] The nebulous mystic remains caught in ordinary consciousness. The man who goes beyond this and, after first ensuring his psychic health by means of preparatory exercises that emphasize the formation of a healthy memory, pierces this mirror of memory and really looks into himself, will see there the effects of wide-ranging processes, originating in the spiritual outside world and continuing still in the spiritual world. In this way we come to know man, and to say to ourselves: what the abstract idealist may regard as something base in man, because he is looking at it only physiologically or anatomically, from the outside — man's inner organism — is a wonderful consequence of the entire cosmos.

Man is the recorded memory of the world. The answers we seek to the origin of the cosmos are stored inside of us, if we but seek for them in the proper fashion, a fashion Steiner has laid out on the table for all to see, a fashion, a process which is available to every living human being, and it ill-behoves those who refuse to use the process to proclaim it is a folly to attempt such a process.

[page 91] And when we really come to know this inner organism, this is what we discover: when we look into our spiritual self and go back in memory over much that we have experienced in life, we can then, from what we revive within us at a congenial hour, conjure up these experiences before our mind's eye, if only as shades. From the image-content our soul has absorbed from the outside world, we can once again conjure up this world before our soul in a way that satisfies us. If we also learn to know our comprehensive inner organism, and learn how its individual parts are spiritually derived from the cosmos, our entire being, as we now perceive it, will present itself as a record of cosmic memories. We look into ourselves, not now with the eye of the nebulous mystic, but with an awakened "mind's eye", and can perceive the nature of our lungs, our heart, the whole of the rest of our organism, looked at spiritually, inwardly. All this presents itself to us as memory of the world, recorded in man just as our memory of the life between birth and the present is recorded in the soul. There now appears in us what we can call knowledge of man as a memory of the world, a replica of the world's development and of the course of the cosmos.

Man is the recorded memory of the world. We have only to begin the process to arrive at this knowledge of self, and once you arrive at this knowledge, you will laugh at those who claim that the planets do not have an intimate connection with the various organs of the body as authors of modern astrology books glibly catalog but lack the ability to make clear why such connections exists.

[page 91, 92] The first thing to do is to familiarize yourselves with the detailed exercises that must be undertaken before man arrives at such a knowledge of self — not the brooding self-knowledge of ordinary introspection, as it is called, but the self-knowledge that sees in each of our internal organs something like a combination of spiritual elements resulting from certain spiritual processes in the cosmos. Once they have understood this aspect of man, people will no longer accuse us of transposing what is in our soul anthropomorphically into the world, in order to explain the world in a spiritual way. Instead, they will say: We first attempt, cautiously and seriously, to penetrate inside man, and there will then be revealed to us the cosmos, just as when we look at memories the sum of personal experience reveals itself.

Man is the recorded memory of the world. If a lie is repeated often enough, it is accepted as truth; if a truth is repeated often enough, it is a useful thing, an important thing, a thing which can begin moving the cogwheels of thought and rotating the wheels of the locomotive which will pull us into understanding the underpinnings of the cosmos in which we humans live, move, and have our being. Whether we live in the East or the West, we form the tension upon the drive wheels on either side of this locomotive pulling us on our odyssey from spirit beings to physicality and back to spirit beings, exactly like the stars in the galaxies come into our view and dissolve from our view, the view of us earthborn physical beings staring out into the far reaches of the Universe.

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

Footnote 1.

See Barfield's [Rediscovery of Meaning](#) for details on the evolution of consciousness.

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**Footnote 2.**

For more information, see these three books: [Social Issues](#), [Toward Social Renewal](#), and [The Renewal of the Social Organism](#).

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Footnote 3.

Animals are not thinking beings; they respond to sensory inputs, possess amazing instincts, but so far as we know, they simply cannot think. Many people treat animals anthropomorphically and claim that certain of their behaviors amount to thinking, but the thinking is only going on in their own heads which they project upon the animals.

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

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**Footnote 4.**

As described in his book [Knowledge of Higher Worlds and its Attainment](#).

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