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A READER'S JOURNAL

**The Effects of Esoteric Development, GA#
350
by
Rudolf Steiner**

Ten Lectures at The Hague, 1913
Published by Anthroposophic Books in 1997

A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2003

One does not have to wait long for Steiner to cover the subject of the title. On page 31, he points out that through the impression of

anthroposophy on the body, the organs become more autonomous and independent. The result is that one's equilibrium is upset in a manner that one might attribute to some vague illness. On page 34, he says:

We can observe that, in the winter, thoughts tend to become abstract, whereas in summer they are more likely to be pictorial and substantial.

On page 37, he gets to the crux of the effects of eating certain foods on our bodies:

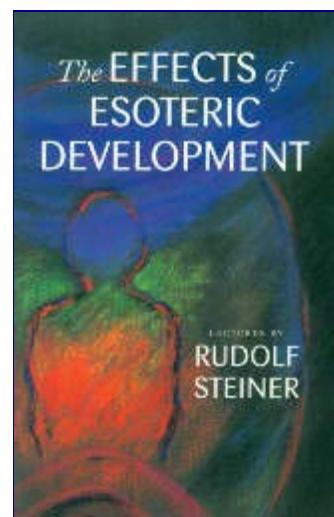
As organisms, our well-being does not depend on working as little as possible, but on activating all our forces.

Thus eating plant food uses and exercises the forces of our organic development, whereas eating animal food products, these forces are not required and thus underutilized. He recommends the development of a "healthy, instinctive life" so that one loses one's appetite for animal food naturally, not based on some abstract principle of vegetarianism. The best example of abstract vegetarianism I've found was in the book, *The Last Barrier*, by Reshad Feild. Reshad followed a strict vegetarian protocol, and became upset by his Sufi master who was eating meat with a relish. He asked him, "Master, why do you eat meat?" His master smiled and said, "I eat meat because I like to eat meat." Thus put, the Sufi blew apart the expectations of Reshad that being a spiritual leader required a strict vegetarian life-style.

Rudolf Steiner performed a similar teaching story for this adherents after a lecture in which he had explained the importance of a vegetarian diet. After the lecture, everyone was very hungry and the only place still open was an Inn that had only meat dishes on the menu. Each person in turn ordered very carefully some side dishes of vegetables, perturbing the Innkeeper to no small amount. When at the very last, the time came for Steiner to order he said, "I'll have the special." When the group was leaving the Inn, the Innkeeper was heard to say, pointing to Steiner, "That man is the only normal person in the group." Apparently his audience had swallowed whole his lecture on eating vegetables as an abstract principle, and Steiner gave them a quick reality check. It was as though he were saying by ordering the meat-filled special, "Eating meat is not necessary nor is it forbidden. Eating only vegetables for some of you is probably pre-mature as it represents a token adherence to an abstract principle, rather than a natural result of your esoteric growth process."

Alcohol produces in the blood what the human would otherwise have to use I-forces to produce.

Milk prepares one to be a human creature on earth, but does not limit one to the earth.



Sugar strengthens the ego. This was demonstrated by exaggeration in the recent John Travolta movie in which he played the angel, Michael, who ate lots of sugar with all of his food. Steiner also points out that in under-developed countries, a low usage of sugar matches a low level of individualization. When such countries become more developed, the natures of the inhabitants of the country becomes more individualized and their sugar usage increases accordingly.

Coffee promotes logical consistency and attention to facts, which is particularly useful to a writer.

Tea promotes dissociation from the facts and stimulates the imagination.

Chocolate is the beverage of choice for various celebrations and family gatherings because it promotes the bourgeois, philistine nature of such events.

On page 56 Steiner pulls out an astounding statement that contradicts what medical science claims to know about the human heart. He says the heart is not a pump.⁽¹⁾ Here's the exact quote:

The circulation of the blood is primary. Through its rhythmic pulsations — its systole and diastole — the heart responds to what takes place in the circulation of the blood. It is the blood that drives the heart and not the other way around.

On page 89 Steiner draws a diagram of the flow of time in the etheric body. This same diagram is produced in full color on the cover of the book. He talks about this diagram on page 90:

The upper part is inclined toward the melancholic temperament, the middle alternates between phlegmatic and sanguine, and the lower aspect is inclined toward the choleric.

After we accept the history of its changing character, where does mind now tend, what are the possibilities for its conscious cultivation, and what will be the new fruits of tomorrow's awakenings to light? (page 329)

As a shortcut to understanding the four temperaments of Steiner's diagram, I offer the following sets of quarternities:

**The [Steiner-Temperament] [Star-Trek-Character] is a [Jungian-Type]
The Melancholic Captain Kirk is an Intuitive.
The Phlegmatic Mister Spock is a Thinker.
The Sanguine Doctor McCoy is a Feeler.
The Choleric Engineer Scotty is a Sensate.**

There is much more in this book than can be covered in a brief review: the Paradise Legend, the Grail Legend, the Guardian of the Threshold, the Cain and Abel Legend ("Am I my brother's keeper?"), Lucifer (the Spirit of the Night), and Ahriman (the Spirit of the Day — the Madison Avenue adman). Here's what Steiner says about the Cain and Abel Legend on page 164:

When we try to impose an idea upon another person, we are trying to implant our own concept into another person; this concept we have implanted into another person is the blunted weapon that Cain plunged into Abel.

Thus coercion at any level is a modern re-enactment of the killing of Abel by Cain.

On page 200, Steiner pulls all the contents of the lectures together thus:

You must always keep in mind, however — along with many things in this theoretical exposition that may have awakened a certain dread in you — a thought that dispels all fear and banishes any fear of danger, and evokes instead enthusiasm and strength of will

in our souls; this is the thought that, by developing ourselves further, we actively contribute — though in small measure — to the evolution willed by the gods.

As a closing thought to help any reader who does not fill with enthusiasm with this thought, who dwells on the difficulties ahead and personal limitations that prevent such evolution, I offer this thought, this tool:

Whenever you find yourself stating a limitation, add the phrase, ", up until now" to the end of the sentence or the unspoken thought. The most important part of the phrase is the comma: at the comma you must pause — and take a long, deep breath. Try it — if you do it only once a day, it will likely be your most important breath of the day, and it will open you to new possibilities for furthering "the evolution willed by the gods" for you.

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Footnote 1.

October 22, 2013 Update: I received an enlightening article (no longer on-line) which says, among other things,

In 1932, Bremer of Harvard filmed the blood in the very early embryo circulating in self-propelled mode in spiraling streams before the heart was functioning. Amazingly, he was so impressed with the spiraling nature of the blood flow pattern that he failed to realize that the phenomena before him had demolished the pressure propulsion principle. Earlier in 1920, Steiner, of the Goetheanum in Switzerland had pointed out in lectures to medical doctors that the heart was not a pump forcing inert blood to move with pressure but that the blood was propelled with its own biological momentum, as can be seen in the embryo, and boosts itself with “induced” momenta from the heart. He also stated that the pressure does not cause the blood to circulate but is caused by interrupting the circulation. Experimental corroboration of Steiner's concepts in the embryo and adult is herein presented.

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

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