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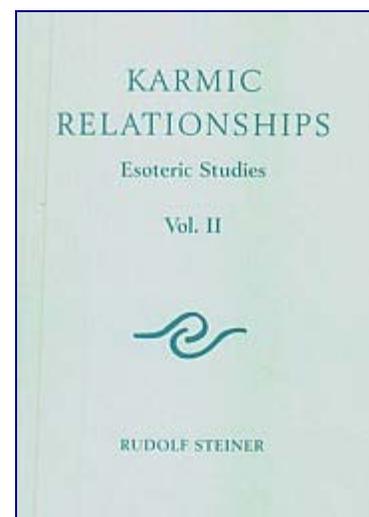


A READER'S JOURNAL

**Karmic Relationships, Volume 2, GA# 236,
by
Rudolf Steiner**

Esoteric Studies, Sixteen Lectures, Dornach, 1924
Published by The Rudolf Steiner Press in 1956
A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©1999

*We not only live in our body, we live in our
karma. Rudolf Steiner*



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The subject of karma is one that not everyone is ready to hear about, and no one was more aware of that fact than Rudolf Steiner. Early in the second lecture he cautions us about entering into discussions or arguments with opponents of Anthroposophy.

[page 26] For if we do so, it will in any case lead nowhere. Thus we must realise that, with regard to our opponents, it can only be a question of refuting calumnies, untruths and lies. We must not give up ourselves to the illusion that these things can be discussed. They must expand by their own inherent power; they cannot be decided by a dialectic. . . . Henceforth the Anthroposophical Movement will take this attitude: It will no longer pay heed to anything other than what the spiritual world itself requires of it.

Steiner often discusses Francis Bacon, whose philosophy consists solely of researching into the world of the senses. Here he says, "everything else was for him an 'idol'"(page 30). Idols in the ancient world were physical objects that represented spiritual objects and, with the evolution of consciousness, these came to be banned from many religions in favor of directly worshiping the spiritual world. What Bacon did, in effect, was to treat the material world as an idol in isolation from the spiritual world entirely. He was to bring to science a material-world-only epistemology, one that proved useful for manipulating the material world via technology, but one that is not useful for understanding a reality that includes both the material and the spiritual.

[page 240] The essential nature of matter is not understood by materialistic thinkers. Matter can be understood only when the creative spirit within it is apprehended. Therefore anyone who denies the reality of the creative spirit within matter knows only a false image of matter and the consequent idolatry is a far greater menace than that of the primitive peoples who are said to represent civilization in the stage of infancy.

[page 126] I have often emphasized that what is harmful about materialism is not that it pays attention only to matter; the harmful element, the tragedy of materialism, is that it cannot really know anything about matter, because it does not recognise the spiritual workings within matter.

If one does not recognize the spiritual workings within matter, it would be like studying plants, but never going past the roots, leaves, and stem, never seeing or examining the flower and fruit. Materialistic science can be understood to be as limited as a biology that only examines the roots, leaves, and stems of a plant. If we ask such a biologist for an explanation of the plant's reproduction system, we will get no satisfactory explanation, because the biologist hasn't a clue. Our explanation would be as meaningful as the old one given to children about where they came from, "The stork brought you." To consider the full range of the plant that comprises one's life, one cannot focus only on the roots, leaves, and stems of one's single lifetime, but one must also consider also what blossoms forth through one's different earthly lives. Thus, the study of a single human life must include both the study of nature and the study of history. In these lectures Steiner shows us "by concrete examples, how the fruits of earlier epochs of history are carried over into later epochs through human beings themselves." (page 43)

Steiner traces the lives of Emerson, going back to Tacitus, a historian in Roman times. In his next incarnation he appears as Countess Mathilde. The great writer of history is reincarnated in the owner of Canossa, a great castle in the Middle Ages. Steiner says of great women that they are often wonderfully gifted as observers. And of what use, one might ask, is observing, if no record is made of the observations? When Mathilde reappears as Emerson, the observations of her lifetime infuse Emerson's writings. A friend of Tacitus was Pliny the Younger. Steiner traces for us the intense reaction of Pliny's reincarnation, Hermann Grimm, when Grimm first encounters Emerson's book *Representative Men*. Grimm cannot rest until he meets Emerson in person, in what one can understand as a reunion of the two great Roman souls or personalities of Tacitus and Pliny the Younger. Through such analyses one can come to understand how the earlier epochs of history are carried forward into the present time via reincarnation. And he cautions that these analyses "will be fruitful only if they kindle deeper love and understanding than are possible when account is taken merely of the impressions of a single life." (page 59)

Another example he gives is of Crown Prince Rudolf, a brilliant personality due to ascend the Throne of Austria, who commits suicide in the prime of his life. Impossible to understand looking at his one life, but when one discovers that Rudolf is the reincarnation of the profligate and heartless Roman emperor Nero, the mystery dissolves.

[page 78] But these things are merely the consequences of the soul's endeavour as it were to direct against itself all the arrows which in the past had been directed to the world. And then, when we have insight into these relationships, we perceive the unfolding of an overwhelming tragedy, but for all that a righteous, just tragedy. The two pictures are co-ordinated.

Steiner is led to finding the connection between Rudolf and Nero by his friend, Schrör, who blurted out the word, "Nero!" when Steiner visited him shortly after the suicide was reported. Steiner says that he had learned to pay special attention to Schrör, especially when things he said things for no apparent reason, as if they had come to him "out of the blue." It occurs to me that when ideas come to each of us out of the blue, just like sunshine, they meet the very flowers of our humanity.

I was at a meeting of a new group recently called a Soul Gathering. As we went around the room for each one to introduce oneself, I noted that each one said, in a slightly different fashion, that their reason for coming was to learn more about the spiritual world, as if they wanted to withdraw from external life. When my turn came I said, "I've come to learn more about the material world and how it works in synchrony with the spiritual world." It has always bothered me about people on the spiritual path that they seem so interested in things of the spiritual world and have so little use [to listen to them talk] for things of the material world. In Steiner I find a balanced approach as he describes here:

[page 89] I have often pointed out that one who grows in a true and right way into anthroposophical life, does not take less interest in external life; rather does he, by

reason of his Anthroposophy, take far more interest. Everything outside himself begins to be far more interesting to him than before; it has far more value for him. For this, however, it is necessary that he should not withdraw from external life, but perceive, rather, the spirituality in it.

Another type of person that bothers me is the type that claims that the only way to perceive spirituality in the exterior world is by getting away into the wilderness, away from all signs of humanity. I call these the "Sierra Clubbers" because they seem ready to club anyone who would dare to bring the slightest taint of humanity to their sacred shrines in pristine nature. They seem to want to spend their days gazing solely on nature. On page 82, Steiner tells us that "certain elements in the perceptive process remain unsatisfied when we gaze out into nature."

[page 82] When he merely gazes at nature, the perceptive faculty in his life of soul deteriorates. He gets a kind of 'consumption' of soul in his sense-world.

[page 82-83] But it was also known how this 'consumption' in the life of soul can be counteracted. It was known that the *Temple Architecture*, where men beheld the equipoise between downbearing weight and upbearing support, or when, as in the East, they beheld forms that were really plastic representations of moral forces, when they looked at the architectural forms confronting the eye and the whole of the perceptive process, or experienced the musical element in these forms — it was known that here was the remedy against the consumption which befalls the senses when they merely gaze out into nature.

The idea that the free acts of one's fellow human today may be recompense for one's own acts in a previous life seems far-fetched, indeed. Steiner brings understanding to this mystery by describing on pages 90 and 91 the process that occurs. To summarize: when you perform a deed that calls for karmic recompense by another person, later in the time between death and rebirth, you will live within the other person. During that time, you will experience through the other person what you did to them. When that person later meets you in the physical world it is with what you have really willed them to inflict upon you. Whether a person meets you out of an original antagonism or out of a "karmic egg" that you laid in them was something that formerly humans were capable of perceiving upon first meeting another person.

[page 92] This feeling, which can be subtly discerned in the facts of life, must again become more general. It will give to life many fine nuances which are of great importance.

If the working out of karmic recompense must wait for a future lifetime, it should not be surprising that waiting is a key part of the process of observing karma. Steiner says that, "At a moment when only the seed of a plant is present, we obviously cannot have the plant." The seed is the equivalent of one's experience when it happens — you must wait for it to ripen within your soul. This ripening begins with your astral body, works into your etheric body, and then into your physical body over the course of three days and three nights.

[page 111]

1st Day and 1st Night: When outside the physical and etheric bodies, the astral body shapes the picture of the experience. The outer ether impregnates the picture with its own substance.

2nd Day and 2nd Night: The picture is stamped by the astral body into the etheric body. And the etheric body elaborates the picture during the next day.

3rd Day and 3rd Night: The picture is stamped by the etheric body into the physical body. And the physical body elaborates the picture during the next night.

When you awake on the fourth day, you will find your will contained in the picture, but you will feel unable to carry out the will. If you concentrate the will becomes sight, "the picture of the causal event of a preceding incarnation." This way of understanding karmic events was known to humans of earlier epochs.

[page 113] Only, according to the opinion of modern men who are clever, those other men — in their whole way of living — were stupid! Nevertheless, those 'stupid' men of the earlier culture-epochs really had these experiences, only modern man darkens everything by his intellect, which makes him clever, but not exactly wise.

It seems that Steiner is saying that modern man is stumbling around in the dark of his own making. Diogenes went around carrying light looking for an honest man — the modern materialistic scientist wanders around carrying darkness looking for a clever man. It seems paradoxical to say that a *clever* man is one who darkens everything with his intellect and then curses the dark!

One of the consequences of this darkening of the clever scientist is that of being unaware of the following process — that in the journey backwards in the time between death and a new birth, you "slip into the other person and feel what *he* has experienced as the result of your action." Plus, due to the infusion of the Moon Spirits who permeate the relived experiences with their own substantiality, "life in the soul-world after death is much richer in impressions than earthly life." (page 140-142) In the book *Fire in the Heart*, Kyriacos Markides says that one experiences seven times the pain or pleasure of the original event during this karmic reliving in the soul-world after death.

These same Moon Beings were the ancient Teachers of humanity, and the mighty wisdom they imparted to us was responsible for our originally attaining freedom. But Steiner tells us that this mighty wisdom has faded away and has been replaced by abstract thinking, "concepts which no longer have any real relationship with the spiritual world." (page 143) Here are Aristotle's ten categories, which Steiner says are "really a survival of ancient wisdom" — I call them the Big 10 Alphabet:

1. Being
2. Quantity
3. Quality
4. Relation
5. Position
6. Space
7. Time
8. Possession
9. Action
10. Suffering

These root concepts are as meaningless in isolation as the 26 letters of the alphabet, which only come to meaning upon being arranged into words and sentences. Similarly these concepts, when combined into words and sentences allow one to read the spiritual world. Of course, to be able to read these words and sentences of the spiritual world, the lamp of the modern clever man will be of little use.

Why? Because
such a clever man
journeys through
the soul-world like
a man who travels
through a foreign

country without knowing the language of the natives. He attempts to speak in the native tongue of truths and realities, and all that comes out of his mouth is meaningless abstract words from his university training, which is of no use in this foreign country.

[RJM NOTE:

The Cat in the Hat book by Dr. Seuss attracts young children because the Cat deals with the Big 10 Alphabet above, and young kids are still close enough to the spiritual world to understand that alphabet.]



[Matthew 5:43-45] Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good , and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.

Steiner says that is so, "but the sun does not admit evil into its realm." That means that in one's passage through the spiritual worlds in the time between death and a new birth, one must necessarily leave behind any parts of one's being that are evil. This requires that an evil person will pass "into the Sun-existence as a kind of spiritual cripple." A really evil person is in dire straits because he must leave all of himself behind.

[page 161] The consequence is that if he does not disappear from the world altogether he must at once prepare to reincarnate, to enter again into an earthly life.

Thus Steiner shows how a really evil person quickly returns to earth for reincarnation. The other aspect is where the evil is left behind: in the Moon region. Thus on the return from the Sun-existence to a new incarnation on Earth, one must return via the Moon region to reclaim one's baggage, if you will, those evil parts that become part and parcel of the working out of one's karma in the new lifetime to come. The part

of one that passed through the Sun-existence remains as one's predisposition to health and the part of one that did not make the cut (remained in the Moon region) remains as one's predisposition for illness. (page 165)

Steiner tidily sums up for us the paltry insignificance of natural laws once one leaves the Earth-existence:

[page 166] When man leaves this sphere and enters the realm of Sun-existence, then no more at all is heard of the natural laws belonging to the earth. The language of the Beings in this realm has reference to spiritual workings, spiritual causes only. In that world nothing is heard of natural laws.

After all, my dear friends, these things must be made known some time or other. For when on earth it is constantly insisted that natural laws are absolute, universal — or even, foolishly enough, eternal — one would fain reply: But there are realms in the universe through which man has to pass in the life between death and rebirth where these natural laws are passed over with a smile because they have no significance there; they exist at most as tidings from the earth, not as any real factor in life.

During the evolution of consciousness, humans were originally taught by the primeval Teachers using their store of remembrances. That is, until the year 1413 A.D., when the Consciousness Soul Age began and freedom for humanity became possible. Before that time, what filled our intellect was the Third Hierarchy [Angels, Archangels, Archai], what filled our feelings was the Second Hierarchy [Powers, Might, Dominions], and what filled our willing was the First Hierarchy [Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones]. Only in our highest sensory structures and intellectual knowledge, represented by the neo-cortex or outermost layers of our brains, do we extend beyond the realm of the three Hierarchies, and that is what makes freedom possible for us. To use a local metaphor, we are like the alligators around South Louisiana, who swim in the bayous, their bodies almost fully immersed in water, with only the topmost part of their skulls and eyes projecting above the water. With our highest senses and intellect, we arise from the Hierarchies we are immersed within to behold the cosmos from the earth.

[page 204] Something else will now be clear to you. When the gods desire cosmic vision, they gaze through the eye of the Moon. But when they desire to behold the cosmos from the earth — whereby an entirely different aspect is revealed — then they must look from out of man. The human race is the other eye of the gods!

In very ancient time it was natural for man to be able to see with the eye of the gods because the Moon was within the earth. And he will be able to do so again when in future time the Moon and the earth are re-untied. Through Initiation, however, through becoming aware on returning into the body that the gods are present there, and through coming to know these gods, man learns to behold the world through the "eye of man." Thus *Initiation reveals to man what in earlier times was revealed to the gods through the eye of the Moon.*

We each live in a world of infinite variety and even two people living in close proximity to each other will have completely different experiences, because their attention, their evaluation of the things they each see will be drastically different, since their seeing is deeply dependent upon their karmic relationships with their surroundings. Steiner sums this process up by saying, "During our earthly existence we behold that which it pleases the Spirit-Beings to reveal to us." (page 223)

In ancient times, when clairvoyance was a natural ability of humankind, if one person asked another whether a third person was an Initiate, very likely this question was asked back, "Have you looked into his eyes?" Because, "Initiates were recognised by the deep, earnest look in their eyes. — And something similar will come again." (Page 242) Today with the advantage of our evolution of consciousness we might ask, "Have you looked into his 'I'?"

I can think of no better way to end this review of Volume 2 of Karmic Relationships than to quote Rudolf Steiner's ending words.

[page 252] In the study of karma we must never call theoretical concepts alone to our aid; we must call upon the whole man. For knowledge of karma can be acquired only when the heart, the feelings and the will participate. If, however, knowledge of karma is acquired in this, the right way, human life will be deepened and due importance attached to the relationships and circumstances by which human beings are led together.

[page 252-253] Thus you must try, my dear friends, to grasp the knowledge of karma in such a way that it calls up the feeling: If I am to approach the holy ground of the spirit where something concerning karma can reveal itself to me, I must take the hands of the gods.

Thus real, thus immediate our experiences must become, if we are to win our way to true knowledge of the spiritual world — which is at the same time knowledge of karma.

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