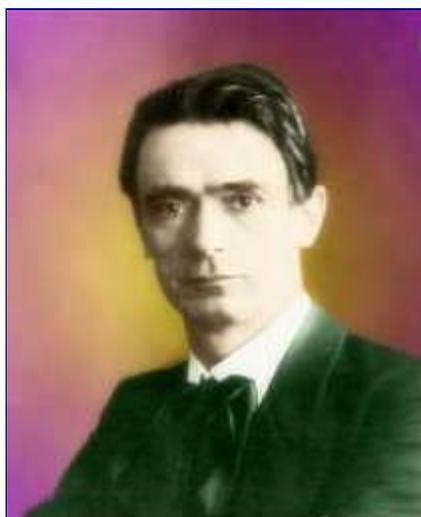


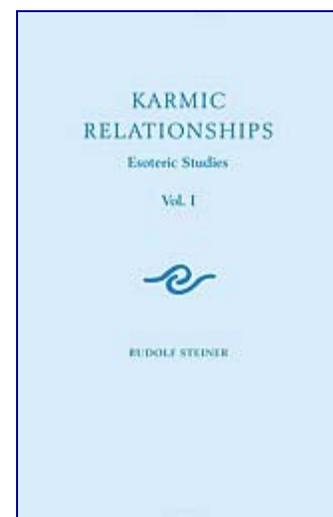
Site Map: [MAIN / A Reader's Journal, Vol. 2 Webpage Printer Ready](#)



A READER'S JOURNAL

Karmic Relationships, Volume 8, GA#240
by
Rudolf Steiner

Esoteric Studies,
Six Lectures in Torquay and London in
August, 1924
Published by The Rudolf Steiner Press in
1975
A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©1999



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

~^~

As we end this series of eight volumes on karmic relationships, Steiner tells us that we will make "no headway unless we ask ourselves" about what we and others have carried over from previous incarnations.

[page 11] From now onwards these things will be spoken of without reserve; we shall speak of facts of spiritual life in such a way that external history and the external world of nature will themselves reveal to us the spiritual realities lying behind.

This is a very dramatic and bold statement by Steiner, and one would do well to ponder this statement as it applies to one's own life. How can one speak of spiritual realities such that history and nature will reveal their associated spiritual components? This is not an easy question to answer, and to accept an easy answer is to completely discount the question. Better to keep it as an unanswered question and begin an unconscious quest for an answer, an answer that will develop spiritually in one's life without one being conscious of the development until one day the answer pops into one's consciousness. Only then will the external worlds of history and nature make their spiritual nature apparent. But who bothers with such foolishness in these days of the 10 second sound-bite, in-depth news coverage that lasts two minutes on the evening television news, condensed books, in short, a life that's lived the way some college kids make it through college: by reading Cliff Notes instead of the books. The danger to doing this is not apparent externally in society at this time, but Steiner made it clear what the problem is:

[page 14] At the present time people think that once something is known it can immediately be spoken about. Indeed everything that enters people's ken to-day is at once put into words and announced.

Don't hold your breath for the talking heads of television to understand the above quote because if they did, they would have to find another job in which they did something productive. Instant *ersatz* enlightenment confronts us at every turn. The seeker of enlightenment runs from one teacher to another

saying, "This new teacher has a center up in the mountains. My wife and I are moving up there to be part of his group." Soon the excitement of the change of scene wears off, the teacher's words become jaded, and a new teacher looms big in his life. Like the Red Queen warned, "One must keep running to stay in the same place."

Another phenomenon that is common is for one to become so enamored of one's own field, one's own intellectual achievements, that one is oblivious to spiritual realities. That is what happened in the 8th and 9th centuries to men of learning.

[page 20] The existence of Christianity was known to the learned men at the Court of Haroun al Raschid but they regarded it as primitive and elementary in comparison with their own intellectual achievements.

A thousand years later and that attitude is still prevalent in materialistic scientists, who, whether Christians or not, still consider Christianity to be no match for their own intellectual achievements. Part of the problem has been the concerted efforts of established religions to produce Cliff Notes versions of Christianity so as to keep their followers from discovering the deeper aspects of spirituality and to keep their attention focused on the rites and requirements of being a good Christian. It should be clear to anyone who has thoughtfully read Steiner's *Philosophy of Freedom* [See ARJ for Review.] that such efforts hobble the individual and blind them to the realities of the spiritual world around them. The monstrance that is venerated in Catholic Churches clearly represents the Host (containing Christ's Body) residing within a blazing sunburst of golden light rays, but the spiritual fact of Christ residing inside our physical Sun is glossed over and never mentioned, if known at all.

The Cliff Notes of Catechism as a guide for living are deemed to be more important than the spiritual realities that lie about us everywhere in the world. Catechism is important for youngsters, but for them to become adults without receiving adult information, creates adults that are unprepared to handle the freedom that is rightly theirs as a human being. Unfortunately the Catechism system fosters a method for teaching that is only appropriate for the authoritarian stage of human childhood. The Catechism, with its authoritarian tone, is appropriate for children from the ages of seven to fourteen because children of that age need authority figures to tell them what to do or they will have trouble developing freedom in their later lives. See the Steiner quotes below from his book, *Education as a Social Force*.

[page 12] Children experience a great uplifting if they can do everything because a person they look up to says it is the right thing to do. There is nothing worse for children than attempting to develop their judgment too early, before puberty.

[page 13] I have read such policies whose first statement is that we should eliminate the principal's office, that teachers and students should be absolutely equal and that we should base the entire school on an attitude of comradeship.

[page 13] People can mature enough for socially responsible community life only if they learn to build their lives upon that true authority they experience during their school years.

Lest anyone doubt the existence of a school system where teachers and students are treated absolutely equal need only look at the New Yorker Magazine, September 6, 1999 issue. Kurt Andersen writes about Celebration, the city and the school system that is "the quasi-democratic, postmodern fulfillment of Walt Disney's totalitarian, late-modern vision." He writes further on the same page:

[page 76] Each child was essentially responsible for his or her own curriculum. Students and teachers were called "learners" and "learning leaders," a classroom was a "nurturing neighborhood," and a student assembly a "grand kiva."

Not surprisingly this whole schema fell apart before the first year had passed. Pedagogical conservatives

were blamed, of course, but if we understand Steiner's words above, we can understand the imminently good sense of having teachers as authority figures in classes from one through the eighth grade.

Is there hope that this movement away from the spiritual world may be reversed? Yes, and that hope lies in the Michael Impulse which began in 1879, shortly before Steiner began his teaching, and it continues today in the souls from the Michaelic School who have incarnated again at the turn of the 20th/21st Century "to carry to full and culminating effect what as Anthroposophists they are able to do now in the service of Michael's dominion." These words Steiner spoke to Anthroposophists of 1924, but as I read this book exactly 75 years later, it seemed he was speaking to me and to the Anthroposophists that I have come to know over the past five years.

What is the Michaelic Impulse? It is the Sun-forces at work upon the earth and us humans. "The Sun is the source of all intellectual life operating in the service of the Spirit." That is how we are able to operate in the service of Michael at the turn of the 21st Century.

[page 32] Utterance of this truth may evoke a certain inner resistance to-day, for men do right not to place too high a value upon intellect in its present form. Those who have an real understanding of the spiritual life will not set much store by the intellectuality prevailing in the modern age. It is abstract and formal, it crowds the human mind with ideas and concepts which are utterly remote from living reality, it is cold, dry and barren as compared with the warm, radiant life pulsing through the world and through man.

This describes my own experience as a physicist. I tried my best to fathom the cold, dry, and barren concepts of physics and gave up. Only in my studies of Steiner, and only after a long period of studying, did I discover the warm, radiant life coursing through the world around me, and I knew immediately, I remembered at once, that I had come to this world at this time in the service of Michael to bring that life of the spiritual world as a reality to others who had also given up, had settled for dross in the place of spirit.

This is a relatively new phenomenon, Steiner tells us. As recent as medieval Christianity, Thomas Aquinas could write of "Intelligences" inhabiting the stars. Carl Sagan while he was alive could only write of "billions and billions" of burning gaseous bodies. Steiner says of his own view of stars:

[page 32, 33] As opposed to the materialistic views prevailing to-day, we ourselves regard the stars as colonies of Spiritual Beings. This seems strange and far-fetched to the ears of a modern man who has not the remotest inkling that when he gazes at the stars he is gazing at Beings related in certain respects with his own life and inhabiting the stars just as we ourselves inhabit the earth.

Reading the above quote, I couldn't help but be reminded of the final scene in the movie of Antoine St. Exupery's famous book *The Little Prince* with all the stars laughing in the sky. He writes, "And at night I love to listen to the stars. It is like five hundred million little bells. . . . And there is sweetness in the laughter of all the stars."

Unfortunately, except for a few mystical writers like this one, we in the Western world have progressed by evaluating views of spiritual realities as pagan mysticism and calling such mysticism by the derogatory name of primitive illusions or hallucinations, up until now. In Steiner's *Education as a Social Force*, he makes it explicit that what the Orient calls reality, we in the West call illusion, and what we in the West call reality, the Orient calls illusion. The exact word the Orient uses is *maya* for the illusion we have that the surfaces of things and their physical constituents make up the entirety of what can be known about the world. In the West we use a variety of words in addition to illusion, such as mysticism, fantasy, hallucinations, just to name a few, to describe what to the Oriental is considered reality. The Oriental lives a life in which they ignore what they consider to be *maya*, and the Westerner lives a life in which they ignore what they consider to be illusion. The Western scientists, while purporting to ignore what they call illusion, nevertheless attempt to find physical evidence of the spiritual world in such things as String

Theory. They labor under the unconscious illusion that if they can only build a fine enough microscope they could see the world the way it actually is. But they are chasing a phantom created from their own thought, and when they finally catch the phantom, they will discover what Walt Kelly had Pogo, the 1960's spiritual philosopher, tell us, "We has met the enemy and he is us."

In ancient times, the reality of the Oriental today was the common state of all humankind. They did not *believe* in the spiritual world, they *knew* the spiritual world existed in parallel alignment with the physical world. Here Steiner describes their experience.

[page 48] On going into a forest, a man would, for example, notice a tree and know that it was the hiding place of a being with whom he had been together in the night. Men then saw clearly, as an Initiate can still see to-day, how spirit-beings made their way into physical habitations as though into their homes. No wonder that all these things passed over into the myths and that men talked of tree-spirits, water-spirits, spirits of clouds and mountains, for they saw their companions of the night disappearing into the mountains, into the waves, into the clouds, into the plants and the trees. Such was early dawn in the experience of the soul: men saw the spirit-world disappearing into the physical world of sense.

Let us inspect the following table to compare our current three states of consciousness with those of the ancient human shortly after the Atlantean catastrophe:

~	Modern Human	Ancient Human
1	Waking Consciousness	Fading Astral Vision
2	Dream Consciousness	Vision of Spiritual World
3	Sleep Consciousness	Vision of One's Karma

No wonder we now call a "vision of the spiritual world" a dream. No wonder we can no longer have personal visions of our past lives and their karmic working out in this life — we are in deep dreamless sleep when we have access to those visions. And our fading Astral vision, what can I say about that? We still surround ourselves with images from the fading astral visions in our uniforms, gaudy costumes, headdresses like native Americans wore (and still decorate our holiday parades), and artifacts that still grace our buildings. There was a cartoon by Gahan Wilson in the New Yorker [page 37 of the July 12, 1999 issue] in which two men in medieval garb are looking at these grotesque monkey-like animals flying away from the exterior balcony of this large church. One says to the other, "Maybe if we put stone statues in their place, no one will notice that they've flown away." What's the message for this review in the cartoon? When our astral vision began to fade over the centuries, and we could no longer see the astral flares of anger above men going into battle, when we could no longer see the grotesque demon spirits that sat on balconies of churches, we built replacements for them in the form of feather-plumed helmets and stone gargoyles.

"What does all this mean?" It means this for the modern human:

[page 51] He "wakes" away the Spiritual in nature, he "dreams away the true spiritual world, he "sleeps" away his karma. This development was necessary, as I have often told you, in order that the consciousness of freedom might arise.

After a Steiner lecture sometime in 1923, a newspaper article appeared. Steiner had emphasized during the lecture that "there is no need to become clairvoyant in order to have knowledge of the spiritual world" because a healthy human intellect can receive the knowledge directly from a seer.

Here we can read what anyone might write who denies the ability of a healthy human intellect to perceive the supersensible world. Certainly those words could have appeared in the newspaper yesterday as well as seventy-five years ago. Here's the 1923 newspaper writer's words as quoted by Steiner:

[page 53] "Steiner wants to apply the healthy human intellect to knowledge of a supersensible world. But so long as the human intellect remains healthy it can certainly know nothing of a supersensible world; as soon as it does, it is no longer healthy."

Wouldn't it be grand to live in this writer's world? A world that is so simple and easy to figure out, that one can deduce reality from premises? The writer's premise is that a healthy human intellect cannot know the supersensible world, so naturally the rest of his argument that follows is very logical, very precise, and very wrong. So much of what passes as science today is similar to this writer's words: tautology passing as wisdom. From now on we must be careful how we use such broad-ranging statements that seem to prove themselves. If the writer had only had the grace to add, "so far as I know", his statements would have taken on a level of veracity that is else severely lacking. This writer's statements explain so clearly why supersensible beings withdraw from his vision — if he were to perceive them, he would define himself as insane!

If we engage our healthy human intellect, with the help of the Michael forces that are raying to Earth during Michael's age, we may each come to perceive in the mineral world, gnomes, kobolds, and dwarves and that vision "leads us to the Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones." (page 54) This is the First Hierarchy, and the Second Hierarchy of Might, Powers, and Dominions follow in the plant kingdom. Here's how Steiner describes the next hierarchies and how behind everything lies the "great mystery of karma":

[page 55] In the plant world, the vision leads us to the Exusiai, Dynamis and Kyrotetes. [Note: here Steiner uses alternate names for the Second Hierarchy.]

In the animal world we (when we see emerge from the animals their own spiritual beings) we are led to a vision of the Archai, Archangels and Angels. [Third Hierarchy]

And in the human kingdom the vision leads to karma.

How can we explain history he asks us, if we continue to speak of cause and effect in history in the same way we speak of cause and effect in the external physical world? We cannot explain World War I by simply looking at all the events that took place since 1914, he says on page 56. Nor the French Revolution by any of the events that preceded it. What are we to do then if we are to understand history truly? We must look at the personalities involved, both their present lives and the lives preceding them. Only then can we come to understand the important role that karma plays in history. Only then we truly understand history. To conclude, as the newspaper writer above in effect did, that "one would be crazy to include karma or past lives in a study of history, therefore anyone who does so is crazy" — well, hopefully it's clear that such a claim is based on assuming the very thing it seeks to prove.

Steiner takes us in detail through the "club foot" of Lord Byron, how it led him to the Greek struggle for freedom and the wounded leg of Ignatius Loyola, how it led him to found the Jesuits. How the leg injury of Loyola led to soundness of the head, when his soul appeared in a later incarnation as Emanuel Swedenborg.

In the following Table, the Seven Archangels are shown with their Ages and Spheres of influence. They are listed in the chronological progression of the Ages, but notice how each Sphere progresses from a heliocentric view. The Michael Age in the Sun Sphere progresses to Oriphiel in the outermost Saturn Sphere (begin at bottom of the table and move up), then returns to Anael in the Venus Sphere, then loops out to Zachariel in the Jupiter Sphere, spiraling into Raphael in the Mercury

Sphere, which proceeds outward to Samael in the Mars Sphere, returning finally to Gabriel in the Moon Sphere, and the Sun-centered helical cycle begins again. This order of cycling indicates clearly that the Archangels are operating out of the Sun.

Sphere	Archangel	1st Year of Age
Sun	Michael	1879 A.D.
Moon	Gabriel	1570 A.D.
Mars	Samael	1262 A.D.
Mercury	Raphael	953 A.D.
Jupiter	Zachariel	645 A.D.
Venus	Anael	336 A.D.
Saturn	Oriphiel	28 A.D.
Sun	Michael	281 B.C.

Steiner tells us that, in the 15th Century, a school in the spiritual world was founded by Michael for those souls who had imbibed the impulses of the Alexander Age and the Dominican and other Christian Orders and were awaiting reincarnation.

[page 90, 91] In this supersensible School, a wonderful review was given of the wisdom of the ancient Mysteries. Detailed knowledge in regard to the ancient Mysteries was imparted to the souls partaking in this School. They looked back to the Sun Mysteries, to the Mysteries of the other planets. But a vista of the future was given too, a vista of what should begin at the end of the 19th Century in the new Age of Michael. All this passed through these souls who now, in the present Michael Age, feel drawn to the Anthroposophical Movement.

We have reached the end of Rudolf Steiner's impressive Karmic Relationships lecture series which he gave during the last months of his life. If you feel drawn to anthroposophy, perhaps you were in Michael's school and have returned here at the dawning of 21st Century to help civilization in its crucial hour. Will it fall into a materialistic abyss or will we be able to raise it by the help of the Michael Impulse into spirituality? Steiner exhorts in his closing words thus:

[page 94] We shall remain united in the signs that can reveal themselves to the eyes of the spirit and to the ears of soul if what I have said in these lectures has been received in full earnestness and has been understood.

To Obtain your own Copy of this Reviewed Book, Click on SteinerBooks Logo below.



