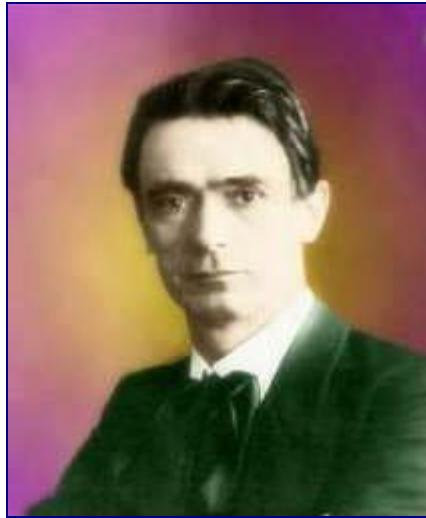


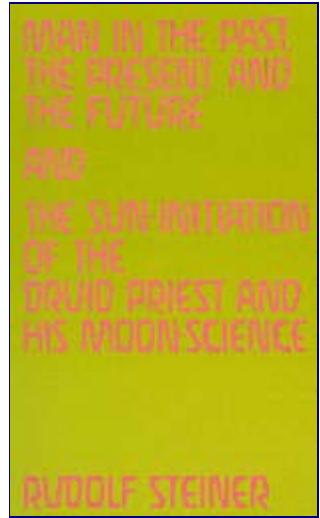
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A READER'S JOURNAL, Vol. 2

Man in the Past, Present and Future and The Sun-Initiation and Moon Science of the Druid Priest, GA#228 by Rudolf Steiner

Four Lectures in September 1923
Published by Rudolf Steiner Press in 1982
A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2003



These four lectures were followup to those he had given a month earlier at Penmaenmawr, N. Wales, which appear in the book, *The Evolution of Consciousness*. This is my second reading of the book; my first coming back in 1997 which did not result in a review. Given the brevity of reviews I did back then of Steiner's books, it is probably a blessing that I have re-read the book in 2003 and am reviewing it at this time.

Steiner begins with a look at how the West has always looked at humankind in a historical or time-based perspective in contradistinction to the East which has tended to look at humankind in a spatial orientation. If we are truly to understand humankind, we cannot be content with an anthropological approach which deals only with the "bones and stones" of the physical body of humans and ignores the aspect of soul and spirit.

[page 16] Man is a being of body, soul and spirit; he is a being who has been penetrated to a lesser or greater extent, by the spirit in such a way that consciousness has been alive within him. The whole nature and being of man can be seen in the development of his consciousness, just as the being of a plant is finally revealed to the senses in the flower.

Imagine that a biologist came to you and said that she was going to explain to you all about the rosebush. As you listened, you noticed that she never said anything about the roses, the flowers of the rosebush. Wouldn't that seem a bit strange to you? How is one to understand the rosebush unless one pays attention to the roses that are its crowning glory, its highest spiritual aspect as a plant? Anthropologists who ignore the soul and spiritual aspects of a human being that blossom into consciousness are likewise ignoring the highest spiritual aspect of the human being, our crowning glory on Earth. It is paying attention to these aspects of our humanity that distinguishes *anthroposophy* — the science of the *anthropos*, the whole human in body, soul, and spirit — from *anthropology* which examines only the material aspects of the human being.

[page 16] Let us therefore go a little more deeply into this most vital aspect of human evolution — the evolution of consciousness. When we consider man's consciousness as it is to-day we can make certain distinctions. In our ordinary waking condition, as we

know it from waking in the morning to the time of falling asleep, we develop a more or less clear and luminous life of ideas which grow out of our life of feeling as the flower grows out of the plant. . . . Even deeper than the feelings, which do, after all, quite directly stimulate our life of thought and ideas — much deeper within our being there is our surging will.

We are consciously awake in our life of ideas, we dream in our feelings, and we are completely unconscious in a dreamless sleep in our willing. Steiner shows us that our three states of consciousness: awake, dreaming, and dreamless sleep map onto the three modalities of the human being: thinking, feeling, and willing in our current stage of evolution.

[page 18] We must, however, realise that what we are now describing as the basic quality of our present-day consciousness has passed through a process of evolution in a comparatively present period, though we do not like taking much notice of this in our materialistic age. But you will not understand the surviving documents of human thought, even of the early Christian centuries, unless you realise that the inner activity of men in those days was quite different from what lives within our souls to-day as the activity of thought.

Our current capability of thinking using logically interrelated concepts is a relatively new development historically. It only began in classical Greek culture and reached its full development during the fifteenth century when it gave birth to what we now call modern science. Going back before the early Greeks, we find it common for humans to be able to see back to their spiritual life and see how they experienced their destiny before arriving on Earth in their physical body.

[page 34] To demand that one should believe in the spirit would have been absurd for this older humanity just as it is absurd to ask modern men to believe in mountains; you don't believe in them, you see them.

As this direct perception of the spiritual world began to fade, humans felt increasingly alienated from the spiritual world — they began to feel "as if they had been expelled from the spiritual world and thrust into a world to which in their essential being they did not belong."

[page 35] But those who were awake at that time felt it, and it is through moods and feelings like this and not in thoughts and concepts that mankind develops.

The concept of the Fall or original sin arose out of the mood or feeling of being cast out of the spiritual world. Steiner makes it clear that this was a concept that dawned in human consciousness to explain this feeling.

Everyone has seen earthworms, who usually live in the soil of the Earth, crawling along the top of the soil after a long rain. Steiner compares us to earthworms - our soul and spirit is like the earthworm and our body is like the Earth. Our soul and spirit live, for the most part, like earthworms immersed in Earth and never coming out. Thus, he calls the human being "a worm for whom it never rains."

On the other hand, human beings do *not* "grow out of the ground like cabbages," he said, but rather they have "been created by the joint activity of the whole cosmic environment." (Page 40) The most important activity of the cosmic environment was what Steiner called the Deed of Golgotha because it provided the rain for us cosmic earthworms to come out into the light of the spirit — the curtain separating us from the spiritual world was rent in twain, as symbolized by the curtain in the Temple at the time of the Deed of Golgotha.

[page 42] We shall see to-morrow how this curtain had existed for a thousand years, becoming thicker and thicker, and how this expressed itself in man's whole mood. Then a light appeared which did penetrate the curtain and to a certain extent the curtain fell

away; it was the light that shone forth on Golgotha. In this way the Deed of Golgotha finds its place in human evolution.

In Lecture 2, Steiner covers the various types of initiate: Moon, Sun, Saturn. He singles out two exemplars: Jacob Boehme as a Sun Initiate and Emanuel Swedenborg as a Saturn Initiate. Here are two passages where he discusses the two men:

[page 46] Jacob Boehme possessed this atavistic power [RJM: of a Sun Initiate] when he looked at the plant and saw the quality of salt below, the mercurial in the middle and the phosphoric above.

[page 49, 50] Whereas Boehme saw reflections of Nature, Swedenborg saw what was accomplished in the etheric by the spirits whose activity was all he could see. Thus when he describes the Angels, it is not Angels whom he sees but etheric forms. Nevertheless, these forms were actually the work of Angels — a picture of the activity of Angels. . . . And whereas it would be an error to claim that Swedenborg saw the spiritual world as such (that was not his peculiar power), yet it was a reality that he saw. . . . Swedenborg . . . saw not mirror-pictures but reality in the etheric, the picture of activities which proceed in higher spiritual regions.

In Lecture 3, Steiner gives us a way to understand such simple things as: 1) why it's important to take a full week's vacation from time to time and 2) what we mean by the expression, "It made an impression on me." Our perceptions affect first our consciousness via our ego and astral bodies. If we experience something over a period of three days, it becomes imprinted into our body of formative forces, our etheric body. After we have slept two or three times on something, it also becomes imprinted on our physical body — it has then, in effect, "made an impression on us." It has become a permanent memory. The etheric and astral bodies bandy the perceptions back and forth in a tug-of-war; if this process continues for three or more days, the perceptions are imprinted into the etheric and physical bodies. Less than three days, the perceptions remain inside of our ego and astral bodies as our individual legacy; longer than three days, the perceptions are imprinted into our etheric and physical bodies which are part of the cosmos, which, as such, become part of the Universe upon the death of our body on Earth. This is a cosmic example of the process Jean Houston likes to call "leaky margins." If we comprehend this process, we can come to understand how a "single writer burning in a garret can change the world."

[page 53] It is only for three days that we can claim any action of ours in the world as significant for ourselves alone. After that we have, as it were, imprinted it on the Universe, and it rests within the whole Universe and belongs not only to us but also to the gods.

It is a deep connection that this three day period is the same amount of time that is required for the temple sleep initiation. Thus the Hierophant put the Initiate into this "sleep" for three days.

[page 54] The purpose of this was to enable him to see for himself what happens during these three days in the world external to him, and how it finds entrance into the real being of man. The Initiate was enabled to see what happens to an idea, to an experience or a feeling, before it becomes a man's own property(1).

"I'm not an Initiate so what good is this information to me?" some of you may be thinking. What you are missing is that since the Deed on Golgotha, the path of initiation is available to all who wish it. We were each enabled to "take a step upwards in evolution" and to achieve morally what had before occurred naturally.

[page 59] The experience undergone by the older Initiates so as to be able to tell men what happens during those three days, was undergone as a unique world-event, as an

event in world-history, by the Christ Being who descended from spiritual worlds into the body of Jesus of Nazareth and, though a God, lived a truly human life. That experience of the three days now became available for all mankind.

Steiner tells us that "an organism is coming into being within man which did not exist in earlier times and of which only the first foundations have so far emerged." This organism will lead us into a "form of consciousness higher than our present waking consciousness." And, as happens when something new comes into the world, it appears or is first noticed because of the problems it causes. Neurasthenia is defined by Webster's as "a syndrome marked by ready fatigability of body and mind, usually by worrying and depression, and often by headache and by gastrointestinal and circulatory disturbances." While the name "neurasthenia" may have fallen out of popularity in recent decades, one can certainly understand that worrying, depression, headaches, stomach and circulation problems are at an all-time high by any measure. All these problems stem from a "weakness of the nervous system" which is the shorter definition in some dictionaries of neurasthenia. It is this weakness that Steiner refers to in the next passage where he predicts back in 1923, the increase in "nervousness" in our world.

[page 62] The way in which the blood circulates through man's limbs, his arms, legs, hands and feet, is continually changing. What we often call "nervousness" (a nervous state) nowadays is an expression of the fact that a higher condition is striving to make its way into man, but that he is unwilling to accept it because of its strangeness, and this produces a restlessness which will cease only when he makes the new consciousness his own.

One can think back in the evolution of humanity to a time when we had no eyes and the light pounding on us caused an irritation in the upper part of our bodies. The place where the irritation was focused was the spots where our eyes-to-be were forming beneath the skin as organs of our coming higher sense of perception, our vision. We can take this process as a deep knowledge that even when something in our bodies is irritating us, it is a harbinger of a new capability that we have not been ready to accept, up until now.

In Lecture 4, Steiner tells us about the Druid priests with their Sun-Initiation and Moon-Science. First he identifies the cromlechs or Druid circles as tools that the Druids built in order to read the book of the cosmos. In those times, there were no ephemerides to consult about tides, sun-rise, sunset, no Farmer's Almanac to consult on the best times to plant or harvest one's crops - there was only the cosmos to consult and the Druids built their cromlechs as a planning tool. Materialistic scientists like to tell us that the Druids used their stone circles to sight the Sun as it appeared over or between the stones at various key points of the year. Steiner reveals to us that the ancient Druid priests who were Sun-Initiates built cromlechs with dark places that no physical rays from the Sun could reach because they used the spiritual rays of the Sun for their guidance. Earlier in Lecture 1, he discussed how the shadows of physical light rays contain their spiritual essence and how the Druids used this light to assist their production of food.

[page 27] But it is only the physical sunlight which cannot penetrate there; its activity penetrates, and the Druid, as gradually through this activity he came to be permeated by the secret forces of cosmic existence, entered into the secrets of the world. Thus, for instance, the actions of the sun on plants was revealed to him; he could see that a particular kind of plant-life flourishes at a particular time when the sun is active in a particular way.

[page 73] The Druid priest looked at the mysteries of the Cosmos. He read there when corn, rye, and so forth were to be sown. These are only instances. The impulses for all that was done were read from the Cosmos. The greater impulses, which were needed, one may say, to complete the yearly calendar, were obtained from observation within the shadow of the Druid circle. So that in this age, when there was nothing that was derived from the human intellect, the Cosmos alone was there. And instead of the printing-press

man had the cromlech in order to unravel from out of the Cosmos the mysteries it contained.

Lecture 4 ends with a discussion of how, as the Druids' technology spread to the East, the Wotan forces, based on a Mercury Mystery in the region of the Black Sea, began to spread toward the West.

There is a lot to chew on in these short four lectures which act as a bookend to his lectures in Wales a month earlier. No definitive explanation of the Druids can be given without taking note of the spiritual insights provided by Rudolf Steiner in the combined set of lectures. To do otherwise would be like talking about the Globe theatre while neglecting to mention the original Shakespearean plays which took place upon its stage.

~~~~~ *footnote* ~~~~~

Here is an example of Steiner referring to an idea as the property of the one who receives it. I point this out because I have encountered many anthroposophists who are appalled by the idea of "idea as property." Rightly understood, the threefold society envisioned by Rudolf Steiner will come into being with this idea as a keystone for the building of societal freedom in which the political (citadel), economic (market), and cultural (altar) will all operate independently of each other. [See [Citadel, Market and Altar](#) by Spencer Heath.]

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