



A READER'S JOURNAL

Reincarnation and Karma, GA# 143

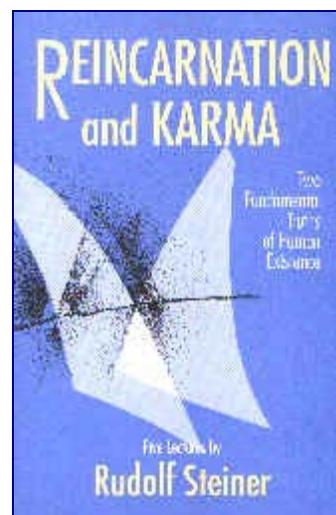
by

Rudolf Steiner

**Two Fundamental Truths About Human Existence
Three Lectures in Berlin, Two in Stuttgart in 1912**

Published by Anthroposophical Press, NY in 1992

A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2003



Okay, what's your thoughts on reincarnation and karma, dear Reader? If you don't have any, consider yourself lucky, as Steiner says that our thoughts "are instruments not very well adapted to penetrate the secrets of reincarnation and karma." Here's why.

[page 14] These two things — physical body, abstract thoughts, scientific thoughts as well — are what we can least of all take with us when we pass through the gate of death. It is in a certain sense easy to take with us our temperament, our impulses, our desires as they have been formed in us, and especially our habits; we also take with us the mode and nature of our impulses of will — but our thoughts least of all.

So if someone tells you that they think that they are good at mathematics in this incarnation because in their previous incarnation they were a great mathematician, they have been led astray by their thoughts, the least useful tool for investigating reincarnation and karma. What Steiner suggests instead is that we concentrate on all the things in this life that we did not like or did not have an aptitude for, and in those things we will find strong hints of what our previous incarnation was like. "If we discover the dullest sides of our nature, they may very probably point to those fields in which we were most brilliant in our previous incarnation." (Page 19) The interesting paradox in our present time is that the large majority of people who don't believe in reincarnation will be re-born with an intense desire, a "torment" to know about their previous incarnation.

[page 23] Naturally, nobody will desire this torment, but people who are materialists today will in their next incarnation begin to understand their inner demands and the advice of those who will be in a position to know and who may say to them: "Conceive to yourselves that you have willed into existence this life from which you would like to flee."

In other words, the materialists lived in a previous life in which they thought it was a folly to believe in reincarnation, and now they live an empty and desolate life, one that they had in their previous life created for themselves by the strength of their beliefs. Steiner says this would be a right way for these people to think of their plight, "It was I was who actually implanted within myself the thought that is now the force making my life so meaningless and barren."

If thoughts are not carried forward to a future incarnation how is it possible that one's thoughts of no future incarnation could have an effect on that future incarnation? It is not the thought, "but the enthusiasm, the perception and the feeling called to life by the thought — these pass through the gate of death with us." (Page 24)

[page 24] Thoughts that deny reincarnation are transformed in the next life into an inner unreality, an inner emptiness of life; this inner unreality and emptiness are experienced as torment, as disharmony.

How is it possible for emptiness to become a torment? Ask any mother who has lost a child. But it may happen with any special object — one day we notice it is gone from its usual place and we feel pain at its absence. Steiner sheds light on how we feel pain in our body — it's a similar process. Our astral and etheric bodies are accustomed to being embedded in our physical body in a certain way. When we are injured these bodies cannot find some part of our physical body in its usual place and we experience that lack as bodily pain.

[page 25] If we send over into the next incarnation no forces of faith or of knowledge, our thoughts will fail us, and when we seek for them we will find nothing. This lack will be experienced as pain and torment.

Everything- always -turns -out -the -way -it's -supposed -to — EAT-O-TWIST — can be seen in action so clearly in the passage from one incarnation to the next. What we suppose the next life to be like, we get to experience it exactly that way. But what about so-called "accidents" that befall us in this life — does EAT-O-TWIST apply to them? Yes, Steiner tells us, "they are connected with the forces and faculties of our soul."

[page 28] We speak of "accidents" when we do not perceive how the things that befall us as strokes of fate are connected with the inner leanings of our soul, and so forth.

So often these accidents provided us with an opportunity to extricate ourselves from some limited situation that we had become trapped in. Looking back on the triggering event it's almost as if some greater part of ourselves had brought this situation into reality, what I call our Soul Captain, "who has willed everything that we have not willed." (Page 29) Our Soul Captain is like a person inside us that is cleverer than we are and leads us into situations we would have gladly avoided, but once into the situation we discover that it was absolutely necessary for the next phase of our life to encounter that unwanted situation. For me, an unexpected kiss under a full moon on Valentine's Eve led to a complete overturning of my previous life in ways I would have never sought. And yet that kiss inexorably led me to where I can be writing these words to you, dear Reader, almost thirty years later. Thanks, Soul Captain.

That this event happened to me shortly after I entered my thirties leads me to share this next point that Steiner makes: those people we meet during our thirties are in many cases those people we met at the beginning of our previous incarnation, as parents or siblings. Naturally we grew away from our parents and siblings as we matured in a previous lifetime, and so we encounter them for the first as adults in this lifetime and develop a relationship with them.

I came across a wonderful statement many years ago that goes thus: "Success is getting what you want, and Happiness is wanting what you get." This simple and profound insight resonated with my being so much that I memorized it immediately. At times I thought I might do a series of "Want Development" seminars for people who are plagued by wanting a life that is different than what they currently have. They would learn during the course of the seminar to want the life they currently have and leave feeling happy. Here is Steiner telling us something rather similar:

[page 67] Consequently it is the outcome of a prenatal, preearthly decision of the will that we are assigned to our particular place in life and have the actual inclination to steer toward the blows of destiny that befall us. If we then become convinced of the truth of the law of karma, we will inevitably begin to incline toward, even possible to love, the position in the world in which we have placed ourselves — no matter what it may be.

We will come to learn that we profit most from our biggest mistakes and learn to appreciate our Soul

Captain's maneuvers to lead us into those mistakes. We will come to understand the wisdom in these words of Rudolf Steiner, "The more we advance into the future, the more must the individual soul be able to feel within itself the benediction of the whole of life." (Page 81)

So often in my life I study and espouse ideas that run counter to commonly accepted beliefs. The list of names are like a rogue's gallery of outcasts from establishment science: Immanuel Velikovsky with his theory of Venus as a comet, Joseph Newman with his energy machine, Andrew Galambos with his definition of freedom, and Doyle Henderson with his theory of emotions, and now Rudolf Steiner with his anthroposophy. Just as it is darkest before the dawn, so it is that the resistance is the greatest to what is the most essential for the time.

[page 85, 86] The student of anthroposophy knows of the existence of luciferic forces, of luciferic beings who have lagged behind the general process of evolution. They work through human hearts and souls and it is to their greatest advantage to launch their fiercest attacks at times when, in reality, there is the strongest urge toward the spiritual life. . . . Anything that differs only slightly from what is customary in the world will rarely encounter fierce opposition; but what comes into the world because humanity has long been thirsting for but has not received it, will evoke violent attacks from the luciferic forces.

This would lead one to ask if this is so, why did Copernicus's ideas of the universe find their way so quickly into being taught in elementary schools. Certainly his ideas were a radical departure from the previous ways people had of viewing their universe.

[page 90] The reason why the Copernican theory took root so rapidly is none other than that for a certain period of time human beings became superficial. Superficiality was essential for the adoption of Copernicanism. Depth of soul - that is to say, the exact opposite — will be necessary for acceptance of the truths of anthroposophy, especially of the fundamental truths of reincarnation and karma.

One of the problems I encountered in studying physics as my major was that I could never figure out how anyone could make a discovery of a physical phenomenon using the logical approach by which my textbooks explained the physical process to me. Everything was so neat and yet unreal to me. It was only much later, upon reading Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, that I came to realize that, even though the physical processes were presented logically in the books, they were *not* discovered in that same logical fashion. The logic was added after the fact of their discovery. What a revelation and a relief that was to me! And yet I now note how the very logical method of presenting the physical process created a superficiality that disguised the essence of the very thing I was searching for: how does one discover truths in the world?

[page 96] In a town in South Germany a theologian once said to me: "I have read your books and have realized that they are entirely logical; so the thought has occurred to me that because they are so logical their author may perhaps have arrived at their content through pure logic." . . . Anyone, however, who studies the writings thoroughly will perceive that the contents were put into the form of logic afterward but were not discovered through logic. I at any rate could have done no such thing, of that I assure you!

In our time there is much superficiality in the sciences due to felt need to explain everything from a belief that only the material world exists, and that the spiritual world is the stuff of hallucinations of unstable people. But just as there was once an age ready to accept Copernicus's ideas, "so is our own age ready for the ideas of reincarnation and karma to be brought into the general consciousness of humanity." (Page 100) These lectures of Rudolf Steiner do not so much provide an understanding reincarnation and karma as they announce the advent of a pervasive public understanding of these two fundamental truths of human

existence.

[To Read an Earlier 1996 Review of this Book Click Here](#)

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

