



## A READER'S JOURNAL

### The Sense Organs & Destiny by Rudolf Steiner Four Lectures

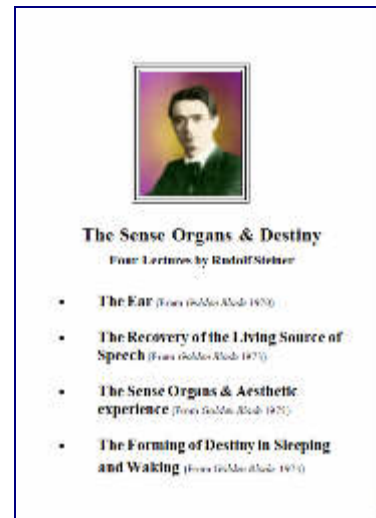
Translated by George & Mary Adams  
Published by Good Mountain Press in 2003  
A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2003

In the first lecture on the ear given December 9, 1922 in Stuttgart, Steiner gives a comprehensive explanation of the workings of the ear. I had to pull

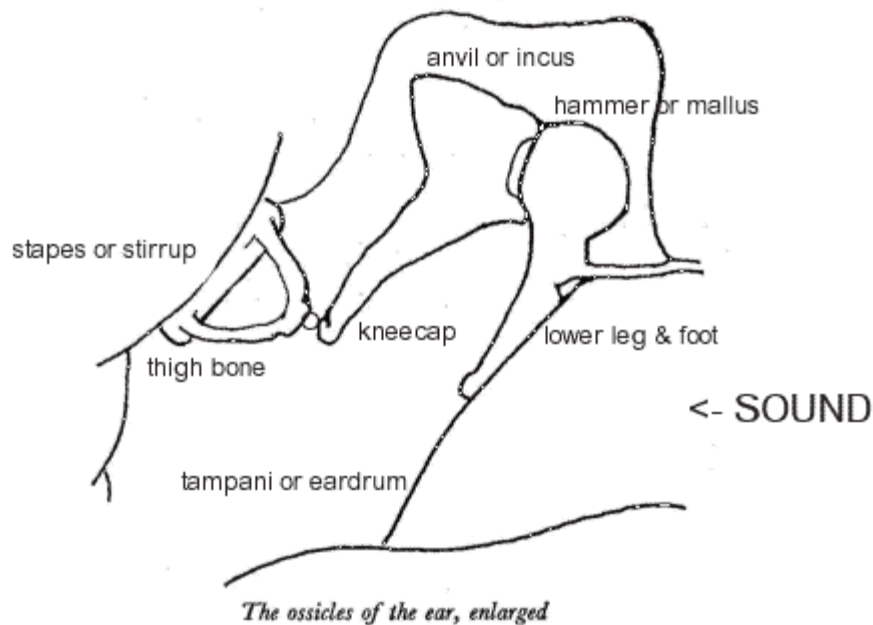
out Gray's Anatomy in order to familiarize myself with the anatomy of the ear in order to understand what he was saying. In effect, he says to imagine that each ear has a foot standing on the eardrum as it vibrates, connected to the lower leg, a knee, an upper leg or thigh bone connected to a hip. Through this miniature leg and foot the vibrations of the eardrum are transmitted to the further reaches of the inner ear. The process is very much the way the sounds of a phonograph are transmitted from a needle resting in the groove of the record as it travels. The vibrations of the groove are picked up by a rigid apparatus, converted into electrical

pulses by the piezo-electric quartz crystal, and sent on to be amplified. In the ear, the vibrations are made by the impinging sounds in one place. In a phonograph record the vibrations are made by serializing the vibrations laid down in the record's groove during recording by the needle's retracing the path of the vibrations. (In Figure 1. I have annotated the parts of the miniature leg/foot analogy.)

**[page 6] Passing now from within outward, that which adjoins the inward portion of the inner ear, and which science calls the *stapes* or stirrup, appears in the light of spiritual**



### THE EAR



**science as a metamorphosis of a human thigh-bone with its attachment to the hip. And the little bone which science calls the *incus* or anvil, appears as a transformed knee-cap. Finally, that which passes from the *incus* to the *tympanum* or drum appears as a metamorphosis of the lower part of the leg including the foot. But the 'foot' in this case rests not on the earthly ground but on the drum of the ear. Within your ear you actually have a human member — a transformed metamorphosed limb. . . . Just as you touch and feel the ground with your feet, so do you touch and feel the drum of the ear with the foot of this little ossicle. Only the foot with which you walk about is coarsely formed. Coarsely you feel the ground with the sole of your foot, while with this foot which is there within your ear you constantly touch and feel the delicate vibration of the drum.**

If we go further inward from our human hip, what do we find? Our intestines, all curled around. If we go further inward from our ear's 'hip' to which the 'thigh bone' is connected, we come to the *cochlea* which is curled around like our intestines.

**[page 6, 7] Let us now go farther back, within the ear. We come to the so-called *cochlea* or 'snail-shell'. It is filled with a watery fluid, which is necessary for the act of hearing. What the 'foot' touches and feels upon the drum has to be transmitted back to this spiral *cochlea*, situated within the cavity of the ear. And now once more: Above the thigh we have the inner organs, the abdominal organs. The *cochlea* within the ear is none other than a beautiful, elaborate metamorphosis of these inner organs. And so you can imagine, there inside the ear there lies a human being, whose head is immersed in your own brain. Indeed, we bear within us a whole number of 'human beings', more or less metamorphosed or transformed, and this is one of them.**

The next idea he presents is a shocker! But for the force of gravity, our legs would become very large ears. Instead they become a means of locomotion. But it is clear that our lower body has a stretched-out ear on each side which we call legs. Why don't the 'legs' in the ear grow downward also?

**[page 7] Under the influence of earthly gravity, the 'ear' which tends to grow downward is changed into the lower man. Why then does not the ear itself change in this way? Why do not its ossicles change into fine small legs right and left? For the simple reason that through the whole position of the human embryo in the mother body, the ear is protected from entering into the domain of gravity, as happens with the little embryonic stumps that afterwards become the legs.**

Rightly understood, our ears retain their membership in the spiritual world, while our limbs and torso walks erect in perfect balance entering the domain of gravity. We swim between two worlds. We can hear music with our ears and we can walk with our legs. We can choose to walk towards good deeds or bad deeds. Whichever way we choose to walk while on Earth will resound during the life between death and a new birth as either beautiful music or dissonant sounds.

**[page 9] Assume for instance that a man went out to do an evil deed. On Earth we can at most describe and register precisely how his legs were moving. But the evil deed clings to the movements of the legs when he passes through the gate of Death. Then, when he has laid aside his physical body and his etheric body, all that lay inherent in these movements of the legs is transformed into a harsh discord in the spiritual world. And the whole of the lower man is now transformed again into a head-organisation. The way you move here upon Earth — taking always the moral colouring, the moral quality of it — this is transformed into a head-system after your death. And with these ears you hear how you behaved morally down in this earthly world. Your morality becomes a beautiful, your immorality an ugly music. And the harmonious and dissonant sounds become the Words, uttered as it were by the Hierarchies, the judges of your deeds, whose Words you hear.**

When we speak we use consonants and vowels which keep us in a constant shuttle between the outer world and the inner world, between Earth and Heaven, between the material world and the spiritual world. In our consonants we maintain our contact with the outer world and tend to be less moral than when we use mostly vowels. In the hymns of church choirs we hear mainly long vowels which is a strong sign that heavenly music is mostly devoid of consonants. In rap music, particularly the genre known as gangster rap, we heard mostly iterated consonants, and the name of the genre betrays its lack of morality.

**[page 12] We could pronounce no consonants if we could not adapt ourselves to the things of the outer world. In the consonants we always have after-formations, imitations of what the outer world presents to us. . . . It will be found that in languages in which the consonants predominate, human beings can far less be called to account morally, because they are much less responsible for their deeds, than in those languages where vowels predominate. For the vowels are an echo of our living together with the spiritual Hierarchies.**

The eye, in addition to the ear, is formed in the spiritual world before it arrives on Earth to perform its function of seeing. In this next passage Steiner explains what Goethe meant when he said that 'the eye is formed in the Light and for the Light'.

**[page 15] Here it is that we with our anthroposophical spiritual science take our start on the one hand from Goetheanism, from what was already known to Goethe. We, of course, have to go farther, in a way entirely consistent with Goethe. I have often quoted Goethe's saying that 'the eye is formed in the Light and for the Light'. Yes, my dear friends, but not in the light or for the light that we see. Consider a human being, a human countenance: the high forehead, the prominent nose, the eyes, the physiognomy. We add to it the living gesture. If we merely registered the spatial forms by some kind of apparatus, we should still have the forms. But when we see a human being, we are not content merely to photograph the spatial forms as with an outward apparatus. We look through the spatial movement of the gestures to the soul that lies behind. Likewise the sunlight: it penetrates towards us. There is the outer sun, the sunlight comes to us. That is only the 'front' of it; behind it is the 'other side' of the sunlight — the soul, the Spirit of the sunlight, and in this soul and Spirit we ourselves indwell between death and a new birth. There the Light is something altogether different. When you speak of the 'look' of a man, you mean the life of soul that comes out to meet you through his eyes; you really mean what lies behind the eye, within the soul. And if I now speak of the Spiritual in the light, I too mean what lies 'behind', within the sun. That is the Spirit, the soul of the light. The finished eye sees the 'front' of the light, the physical aspect; but the eye itself was formed by the soul and Spirit of the light, by that which lies 'behind'. Thus having understood Goethe's saying, we should put it thus: 'The eye which sees the light is formed by the soul and Spirit of the light, ere ever it assumes physical existence here on Earth.'**

In 1965 I worked for Hal C. Becker at Tulane Medical School. He had done the earliest experiments proving the existence of subliminal perception. He had noticed that, particularly in older people, their throats seemed to have a slight motion while they listened to people talk. He measured their nerve pulses and that led him to postulate the possibility of subliminally communicating to people, i.e., without their being consciously aware of it. In this next passage Steiner explains that the comprehension of human speech is made possible by humans because they subliminally speak the words they are hearing with their etheric bodies. This subvocal speech is carried via the Eustachian tubes to the eardrum where the brain is able to match it to the words the ears are hearing externally. While the muscles of the mouth and jaw have moved imperceptibly to create the words and from the movements, the brain registers comprehension of the words being heard externally. That this subvocal speech is visible (and sometimes audible) in the elderly indicates that with age, some people's material bodies are driven by their etheric bodies or at least move in synchronism with them. This movement-comprehension link makes good sense to me in my

attempts to understand French and German words -- until I am able to say some fleeting word I have heard in a song or conversation, I am not sure what it was I heard. This explains something Steiner mentioned in another lecture: children learn to talk before they learn to comprehend speech or to think. Without the talking coming first, comprehension will not happen.

**[page 16, 17] You hear some word, for instance *Baum* or Tree. You yourself can speak the word Tree. In your ear, in organs formed and modelled after heavenly activities, as I described just now, there lives what you express in the simple word Tree. Again, you yourself can say the word. What does it signify that you can say the word Tree? By the larynx, by the organs of the mouth, etc., the earthly air is brought into such formations that the word Tree is expressed. There in reality you have a second ear, over against your hearing. And there is yet a third, which is only insufficiently perceived. When you hear the word Tree, you yourself with your etheric body — not with your physical but with your etheric body — speak the word Tree very quietly to yourself; and through the so-called Eustachian tube, which passes from the mouth into the ear, the word Tree sounds forth ethereally, going out to meet the word that comes to you from without; and the two meet, and thus you understand the word. Otherwise you would only hear it and it would be nothing in particular. You understand it by saying back through the Eustachian tube what comes towards you from outside. In that the vibrations from outside meet the vibrations from within, and interpenetrate, the inner man understands what comes to him from without.**

In the above explanation I could get a feeling for how we make sense out of the vibrations we hear in the air that we call speech. All the other scientific explanations I've encountered previously have always left me cold — as if something vital were missing.

**[page 17] You go to a University and listen to what is said there about the eye or ear; or you read it for yourself. But I think your heart will still be left cold. Let outer physical science describe the ear to you; your heart is left cold, it is not really interested. The thing is objective enough in that sense! But if I describe it to you as I have done just now, if I show how your understanding of the word Tree comes about; and how the ear is an after-image of Heavenly activities: I should like to know the soul whose life of feeling would not be stirred by this, who would not feel the wonder of it, who would not really *feel* with such a description.**

The more I study spiritual science the more I come to understand that it is not less objective than material science, it is actually *more* objective. This is not something one could expect a materialistic scientist, as I had been for many years, to understand.

**[page 17, 18] Such is the quality of anthroposophical Spiritual Science. It describes things no less objectively than ordinary science; for nothing at all subjective is mingled with it, when I describe how the ear is formed and shaped out of the Heavenly spheres. And yet the heart, the life of feeling is immediately called into play. The second member of the human life of soul, intimately connected as it is with the wholeness of our humanity, is called into play. Whatever the head acquires through such a science, the heart is immediately taken hold of by it. Thus, anthroposophical science goes to the heart of man. It is not a science of the head, it is a science that goes straight to the heart. It fills not only the head, it fills and fulfils the human being of the blood, the circulation, the heart.**

"Swotting" is a colloquial word that means studying hard. I had never encountered it during college or anywhere else until I found it popping up in Steiner translations into English. Its nearest equivalent to the American ear would be "cramming" as in "cramming for an exam." I never thought much about those who stayed up all night cramming for exams because those who did seemed to spend the earlier part of the term

doing everything else but studying. The idea that one could pass college courses by cramming everything into one's head right before the exam seemed ludicrous to me and I never considered such a thing. So, it is interesting to me now that Steiner would say that those who crammed for their exams are the very ones who look down on his spiritual science.

**[page 19] Spiritual science cannot be 'swotted'. That, maybe, is a bad joke, but after all, it is they who are only used to 'swotting' who chiefly look down on spiritual science. Spiritual science, as you are well aware, must be acquired with inner activity. We ourselves in our inner life must do something for it, we must be inwardly alert and quick. Even then, it will always happen that what we attain at first in spiritual Imagination is quickly lost. It is fleeting, it disappears quickly. It is not easily incorporated in our memory. After three days all that we have attained in this region — that is to say, only by the ordinary effort to bring it to Imagination - is certain to have disappeared. It is for the same reason that the memory in the etheric body after death disappears after three days.**

How are we to bring some insight of etheric Imagination into more enduring concepts? By writing is one way to do it — it calls our head into action. Steiner explains that he used this method a lot and was surprised to see the array of notebooks that he created doing that. But it is not writing intended to be read later. It is writing for the purpose of engaging in "an activity of the head."

**[page 20] No, it is not a question of reading it afterwards; the point is only to be engaged in this activity, which is an activity of the head. For then we unite the Imaginative thinking with the ordinary thinking. Then we can remember it, give lectures on it. If we did not make such efforts we could at most talk about it on the very next day. Afterwards it would have disappeared, just as the panorama of our life disappears three days after our death.**

We are born as infants and each stage in our life, 0-7 years, 7- 14 years, is vital to our progression into full humanity. To skip any stage would have a dramatic effect.

**[page 21] If you were born at the age of seven — if you lived till your seventh year in some other state of existence, say as an embryo — if you were only born at the age of seven, yet so as to receive your second teeth at once, having had the first already in the former state; then you could never become a religious man or woman. For the predisposition to a religious nature could not work on into an earthly life which had begun in that way. All the religious tendency which you possess — you bear it within you because the first seven years of your life are present in you. You do not perceive them as a living present; nevertheless they are there in you as such. In the first seven years of life we are absolutely devoted to the outer world; truly that is a religious feeling.**

**[page 22] And if we were born in the fourteenth year of our life — born in the state of puberty — we should never become moral men and women. For the moral qualities must be acquired by the inner development of the rhythmic life between the seventh and the fourteenth year. Hence we can have so great an influence on the moral education of man, in the first or elementary period of school life.**

"Why do we need a Spiritual Science here on Earth? When we enter the realm of Spirits the spiritual light will be around us anyhow." Steiner asks and answers his own question. He says it's as if we were to say of what use is an eye to me, the light will be there whether or not I have an eye. What such a view misses is that if we do not each develop in ourselves a spiritual science, we will be unable to perceive anything rightly when we enter the realm of Spirits between lifetimes. Ancient humans had a native clairvoyance that allowed them to see into the spiritual world, but that is gone now. Humans face a new challenge.

**[page 23] They have now entered once more upon the stage where they need an eye for**

**the spiritual world into which they will enter after death. This eye they will not have if they do not acquire it here on Earth. As the physical eye must be acquired in the pre-earthly life, so must the eye, for the perception of the spiritual world, be acquired here on earth through spiritual science, active spiritual knowledge. I do not mean through clairvoyance — that is an individual affair — but through the understanding, with healthy intelligence, of what is discovered by clairvoyant research. It is simply untrue to say that one must see into the spiritual world oneself in order to believe what the clairvoyants see. It is not so. Use your healthy human understanding, and you will see that the ear is in truth an organ of Heaven.**

What is most amazing to me is this next statement, "The clairvoyant has to acquire this spiritual eye just the same as other men." Why? Because the clairvoyant perceives with Imagination and this etheric body seeing is fleeting and disappears within three days unless worked diligently upon to convert into ordinary understanding. We do not need to do research in a laboratory in order to use a DVD player or a Video Camera. Most of us are not able to do such research. But some people have already done that and we can benefit from their research and development when we use the products of their work. Similarly it is with clairvoyants. They can provide the research that allows us to understand spiritual truths even though we do not have their capabilities.

**[page 24] In effect, clairvoyance as such is not the essential task of man on earth. Clairvoyance must only be there in order that the supersensible truths may be found. But the task of man on earth is to understand the supersensible truths with ordinary, healthy human understanding.**

Those who say that anyone who understands spiritual truths is crazy are projecting their own brand of craziness on those that are sane and healthy. On the contrary those who understand spiritual truths are like the seed corn of humanity — the seeds that will grow us into full humanity as moral human beings. If we do this, Steiner predicts, "Then there will come over mankind a powerful feeling, a feeling that it is above all important to put into effect in education, in teaching."

**[page 25] Educate in such a way that when the age of puberty arrives — for it must be developed by that time — man has the living feeling: 'If I am not good, I am not a whole man — I have not the right to call myself a man.' Then you will have good moral instruction, true moral teaching of mankind, as against which all emphasis on moral preaching and the like is worth nothing.**

Does it seem too extreme that Steiner claims that if humans are not given a moral education -- in other words — do not have morality drawn out of them by the age of puberty, that no amount of preaching from the pulpit thereafter will be much good? One need only look about one in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to confirm the truth of what he says. When immorality and preaching in a society increases in lock step, is that not a strong indication that preaching will never reduce immorality? What will? True education of the type that Steiner inspired in his Steiner Schools and Waldorf Schools will. Teaching no religion and doing *no* preaching, they simply help children to draw morality out of themselves so that it becomes an essential part of their being.

**[page 26] Educate the human being so that he feels the moral element within him as an essential part of his own human individuality, and feels himself crippled when he lacks it — feels that he is not a full human being when he does not possess it. Then, in fine fashion, he will discover the moral life *entirely within himself*.**

In the second lecture on "The Sense-organs and Aesthetic Experience" given in Dornach on August 15, 1916, Steiner begins with an observation that seems particularly pertinent in our day when one can hardly speak in public without checking out one's words for political correctness. What is deleterious effect of political correctness? Read this passage.

**[page 29] Nowadays, when human beings have become so personal and really want to let personal feelings cloud their perception of the truth, one has to speak more in generalities if one has, under some circumstances, to describe the truth.**

During the [Old Moon period](#), humans had dream-like visions, a native clairvoyance that was appropriate for their time, but would be considered pathological in our time. The malady called "Full Moon Madness" is one of the vestiges of this time in human history.

**[page 30] For if someone has a Moon vision, this is suited only to lead to a feeling, an activity, a deed which would have been appropriate on the Old Moon. But if someone has a Moon vision here during the Earth period and does things as they are done with an earthly organism, that is pathological. A man acts in that way only because his earthly organism cannot cope with the vision, is in a sense impregnated by it.**

If one is to cope with such visions, one must become an artist in this time. The seven life processes of Breath, Warmth, Nutrition, Secretion, Sustenance, Growth, and Reproduction must be imbued with a heightened activity of soul. This can proceed in two parts. First the three processes of Breath, Warmth, and Nutrition, which normally happen separately, are brought together into a symbiosis, a unity.

**[page 32] They are not separate as in the present organism, but set up a kind of association. An inward community is formed by the processes of breathing, warming and nutrition; not coarse nutrition, but a process of nutrition which takes place without it being necessary to eat, and it does not occur alone, as eating does, but in conjunction with the other processes.**

Then the other four life processes of Secretion, Sustenance, Growth, and Reproduction are brought together into a unity and something happens: one is able to convert the Old Moon visions into a comprehension, a comprehension that leads to an aesthetic appreciation. This happens when our sense-regions become life-regions, and the life-processes become soul-processes.

**[page 34] *Real aesthetic life in human beings consists in this, that the sense-organs are brought to life, and the life-processes filled with soul.***

**This is a very important truth about human beings, for it enables us to understand many things. The stronger life of the sense-organs and the different life of the sense-realms must be sought in art and the experience of art. And it is the same with the processes of life; they are permeated with more activity of soul in the experience of art than in ordinary life. Because these things are not considered in their reality in our materialistic time, the significance of the alteration which goes on in a human being within the realm of art cannot be properly understood. Nowadays man is regarded more or less as a definite, finished being; but within certain limits he is variable. This is shown by a capacity for change such as the one we have now considered.**

While our senses of sight, warmth, taste and smell are separate senses, they can work together as a unity to create an aesthetic sensibility in artists and art lovers.

**[page 36] A painter, or someone who appreciates a painting, does not merely look at its colours, the red or blue or violet; he really tastes the colours, not of course with the physical sense-organ — then he would have to lick it with his tongue. But in everything connected with the sphere of the tongue a process goes on which has a delicate similarity to the process of tasting. If you simply look at a green parrot in the way we grasp things through the senses, it is your eyes that see the green colour. But if you appreciate a painting, a delicate imaginative process comes about in the region behind your tongue which still belongs to the sense of taste, and this accompanies the process of seeing. Not**

**what happens upon the tongue, but what follows, more delicate physiological processes — they accompany the process of seeing, so that the painter really tastes the colour in a deeper sense in his soul. And the shades of colour are smelt by him, not with the nose, but with all that goes on deeper in the organism, more in the soul, with every activity of smelling. These conjoined sense-activities occur when the realms of the senses pass over more into processes of life.**

This covers the visual arts. Poetry, music, and other auditory arts are based on an "ensouled sense of balance and movement." Once more life-processes must become ensouled and unified for us to appreciate the aural arts.

**[page 37] If the listener to a piece of music develops the fourth life-process, secretion, so far that he begins to sweat, this goes too far; it does not belong to the aesthetic realm when secretion leads to physical excretion. It should be a process in the soul, not going as far as physical excretion; but it should be the same process that underlies physical excretion. Moreover, secretion should not appear alone. All four life-processes — secretion, sustenance, growth and reproduction — should work together, but all in the realm of soul. So do the life-processes become soul-processes.**

In this next passage Steiner goes into detail about the usage of abstractions by materialistic scientists who are attempting to steer us into the worst kind of materialism, a "mystical materialism," which will have no concrete reality. It is curious how the most adamant critics of spiritual science accuse it of what they are most guilty of doing out of their awareness, up until now.

**[page 37, 38] Think of those who know nothing of the spirit; what do they know of this, that all the realms of the senses can be transformed in such a way that they become realms of life, and that the life-processes can be transformed in such a way that they appear as processes of the soul? What do present-day physiologists know about these delicate changes in the human being? Materialism has led gradually to the abandonment of everything concrete in favour of abstractions, and gradually these abstractions are abandoned, too. At the beginning of the nineteenth century people still spoke of vital forces. Naturally, nothing can be done with such an abstraction, for one understands something only by going into concrete detail. If one grasps the seven life-processes fully, one has the reality; and this is what matters — to get hold of the reality again. The only effect of renewing such abstractions as *elan vital* and other frightful abstractions, which have no meaning but are only admissions of ignorance, will be to lead mankind — although the opposite may be intended — into the crudest materialism, because it will be a mystical materialism. The need for the immediate future of mankind is for real knowledge, knowledge of the facts which can be drawn only from the spiritual world. We must make a real advance in the spiritual comprehension of the world.**

Modern day writers have Kant blinders on as they tackle such subjects as *catharsis* with their dialectics — they are unable to penetrate the *ding an sich* because Kant taught them that it is not possible. Steiner directs our attention to Aristotle and his *Poetics* and we get a glimpse of how to apply the insights of the earlier parts of this lecture to understanding drama, particularly tragedy and catharsis.

**[page 38] Aristotle says: Tragedy is a connected account of occurrences in human life by which feelings of fear and compassion are aroused; but through the arousing of these feelings, and the course they take, the soul is led to purification, to catharsis. Much has been written about this in the age of materialism, because the organ for understanding Aristotle was lacking. The phrase has been understood only by those who saw that Aristotle in his own way (not, of course, the way of a modern materialist) means by catharsis a medical or half-medical term. Because the life-processes become soul-processes, the aesthetic experience of a tragedy carries right into the bodily organism**



**those life-processes which normally accompany fear and compassion. Through tragedy these processes are purified and at the same time ensouled. In Aristotle's definition of catharsis the entire ensouling of the life-processes is embraced. If you read more of his *Poetics* you will feel in it something like a breath of this deeper understanding of the aesthetic activity of man, gained not through a modern way of knowledge, but from the old traditions of the Mysteries. In reading Aristotle's *Poetics* one is seized by immediate life much more than one can be in reading anything by present day writers on aesthetics, who only sniff round things and encompass them with dialectics, but never reach the things themselves.**

As a college student in physics, I was taught to be logical, to think logically, to understand the world logically. The implicit promise made to me was that as a result of logical thinking I would be able to think validly about the world, in a way in keeping with reality. What I found instead was that whenever I focussed strictly on logic, I came to conclusions that were at variance with the reality around me. In my earlier studies and particularly in Steiner's work, I came to understand the limitations of logical thinking and to avoid swallowing whole anyone's statements solely because they had an aura of logical proof surrounding them.

**[page 42] It is often thought to-day that when anyone makes a logical statement that can be logically proved, the statement must be applicable to life. Logic alone, however, is not enough. People are always pleased when they can prove something logically; and we have seen arise in our midst, as you know, all kinds of world outlooks and philosophical systems, and no-one familiar with logic will doubt they can all be logically proved. But nothing is achieved for life by these logical proofs. The point is that our thinking must be brought into line with reality, not merely with logic. What is merely logical is not valid — only what is in keeping with reality.**

Emerson said, "Every word was once a living metaphor." With usage the ensouled nature of the living metaphor gets more and more flattened out till the word becomes simply a thing. The process of trotting becomes a "trot", the process of singing becomes a "song", the process of plowing becomes a "plow". Lost forever is the magic of the process that led the first human to speak the words: *trot — sing — plow*. Once a process is reified into a noun, we freeze a living process into a dead thing — we enter the world of materiality and leave the world of spirit. Only if a poet with a flowing tongue recreates the living process are we able to catch a glimpse of the glory of a common noun that was once a magnificent process — a pinned specimen on the wall that was once a fluttering butterfly.

**[page 50] You will remember I explained to you the difference it makes to man whether the words he speaks are formed in such a way as to refer only to material things, in which case speech assumes a materialistic character, or whether in his speaking he unfolds a certain idealism, so that every time he utters a word, the feeling is present in him that he belongs to a spiritual world and that the words that ring in his speaking, coming as they do from the soul, must have some relation to Spirits.**

Here Steiner reminds us of the importance of idealism — it keeps us in touch with the spiritual world. None of the dictionary definitions seem to fit any more the intrinsic meaning of idealism, so I will venture my explanation of what Steiner means by idealism — the process of understanding that ideas have a reality independent of the physical world, that ideas, in fact, originate in the spiritual world. It is through our ideals that we maintain our connection with the Archangels.

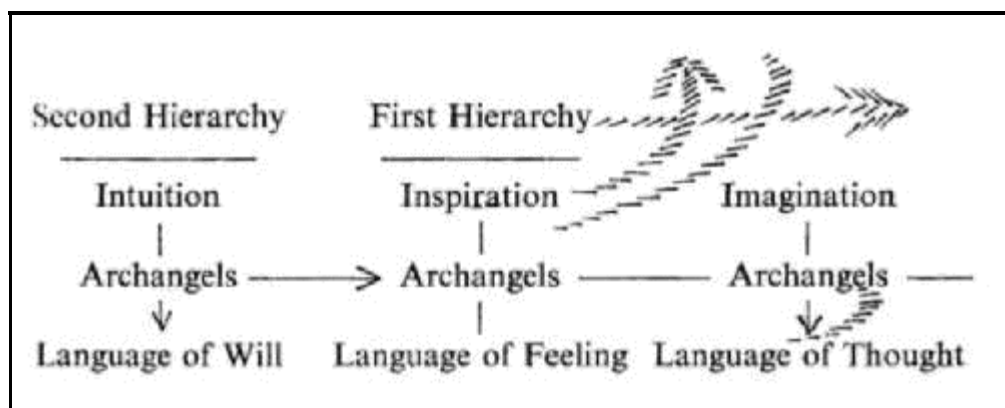
**[page 50] Man comes, between falling asleep and awakening, into a wrong or right relation with the Archangels. If he allows idealism to disappear altogether from his speaking, then he gradually loses the connection, which is so essential to him, with the Archangels. I am reminding you of this, because I want to speak to-day more particularly of one aspect of this relationship of human speech with the hierarchy of the**

**Archangels. Speech, like everything else in evolution that has to do with man, as we have had full opportunity of realising in our study of his being, has had its history.**

Think of the words we call onomatopoeic like *splash, tingle, thump, etc* — can you not hear in the word a description of the process being described? A living metaphor now frozen into a common word. If we go back only to early Greek civilization we find that humans had a living relationship to words. Even in more recent times we can find examples of this closer relationship to process.

**[page 51] The man of olden time entered with heart and soul into the sounds of his words and into the whole way the sounds were formed and arranged. And in the case of the languages of Northern Europe we do not even need to go back so far before we come to a time when the word *Pflug* (plow) gave man the same inner experience as did the activity of plowing. This has been lost, and the word has become no more than a sign. But it is scarcely more than 1500 years or so since words were still *felt* in this way in the Northern parts of Europe. The feeling a man had when he was plowing was similar to the feeling he had when he heard the word which in those days designated the plow. When anyone was listening to or speaking a word, it was not so much his thinking that partook in the experience as his feeling.**

In Figure 2, one can see the diagram Steiner drew upon the board as he gave this lecture. What one will miss is the connection between his words and each line he drew as he spoke the words, so we will have a slightly more difficult job to understand his words receiving the diagram all of a piece. From the diagram it is clear that the Archangels play an essential role in the process of language.



**[page 52] The evolution of language on Earth has thus a deep and intimate connection with the evolution of the Archangels. We can go so far as to say that in the evolution of speech and language we are beholding the evolution of the Archangels themselves. For even when we are studying something that has to do with the Earth, it is by no means impossible in the course of that very study to come to a knowledge of the evolution of higher spiritual Beings. We need only learn how to relate particular facts and phenomena to particular higher spiritual Beings, and we can arrive at a clear perception of how the continuous evolution of the Archangels is expressed and revealed in the changes that are to be observed in man's faculty of speech.**

First, in the later part of the Atlantean evolution, the Archangels came to language by way of Intuition and bestowed upon human beings a Language of Will. Steiner tells us that "in those older times we find words that express how man reacts, what he finds himself impelled to do under the influence of the world around him. The most ancient language of all consisted almost entirely of expressions of will."

**[page 53] So long as it all depended upon Intuition, the Archangels surrendered themselves to the next higher Hierarchy, --- Kyriotetes, Dynamis, Exusiai. They were within the worlds of this Second Hierarchy, and it was the experience of standing Intuitively within this Second Hierarchy that enabled them to put the speech-forming power into human life on Earth.**

To keep track of the Hierarchies being discussed, refer to [The Spiritual Hierarchies](#) table in the Steiner Guide. Following this progression up the Hierarchies will lead you to a revelation about the Holy Trinity, which Hierarchy does not appear in the diagram, but if it did, it would be positioned to the right of the First Hierarchy. The progressions of Hierarchies were established in the first century A. D. by Dionysius the Areopagite and the reason for the absence of the Holy Trinity from his Hierarchies will be made clear further down.

**[page 54] In the next epoch the Archangels make, as it were, a step forward and then their speech-forming power flows no longer out of Intuition but out of Inspiration. They are not now completely surrendered to the next higher Hierarchy [RJM: the First Hierarchy]. (What they did still receive through their devotion to this Hierarchy underwent a change; it ceased to be something they could then communicate to man as speech or language). Now they hearken to the *Inspirations* of the *First Hierarchy*, — Thrones, Cherubim, Seraphim, — and from out of this Inspiration they pour down to Earth the speech-forming power.**

In the process of this change, human beings became able to call forth feelings when they spoke and to grasp the feelings when they listened to another speak. No longer only a tool of human will, speech became an instrument of communicating feelings as shown in the middle section of Figure 2. Steiner tells us that this language of feeling persisted up to Plato's time, and then sank on the reefs of Aristotle's categories.

**[page 56, 57] The first philosophical pedant is Aristotle, the great and universal spirit. It will surprise you that I give him these two appellations, one after the other, but we do not understand Aristotle unless we see in him the first philosophical pedant and at the same time the universal spirit. He is great in a certain aspect but he is in another aspect the first pedant philosopher, for he made *out of words* categories of thought. It would never have occurred to the Greek of an *older* time [RJM: *before* Plato] to take words and force them, as it were, to yield categories of thought; he still felt the words as something that is *inspired into* man, still felt the presence of higher Spirits in speech and language.**

Refer to Figure 2. while reading the next passage. We reach a point where the Archangels have evolved, but have no Hierarchy further up than the First Hierarchy of Dionysius to receive Imagination from. This resulted in the flattening out, the deadening of speech which we as humans of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century have been born into. And in our understanding of the world, we have reached a point where we can now longer proceed logically unless we take into account an evolution involving the Hierarchies.

**[page 58] The Archangels, who belong to the Third Hierarchy, received Intuitions from the Second Hierarchy, and Inspirations from Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones - the First Hierarchy. Whence do they receive Imagination? There is no Hierarchy beyond the First! The Imaginations cannot at any rate come to them from any one of the Hierarchies named in the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite. For he tells of no Hierarchy beyond the first. Certain Archangel Beings were therefore obliged to turn to the *past* for Imaginations, to find in the past the pictures of the speech-forming power,- for that is what the Imaginations are. What came from an earlier time had to be carried on into the future. There was no longer any immediate and present flow of the speech-forming power. And inasmuch as speech now took its source from an earlier stage, into it crept an Ahrimanic element. This is a fact of incalculable significance. And what the Archangels felt above them came to expression in the world of man in a deadening of speech and language. Language became polished and at the same time paralysed, it no longer retained the livingness it had in earlier days.**

What happened to effect the evolution of the Hierarchies, creating another Hierarchy greater than the First? It was something that happened in the first century during the time of Dionysius, but of which he

took no note. Something happened to the Gods that was already present on Earth in picture, in Imagination, but which Gods had not experienced before: "the *passage through Death*."

**[page 58, 59] The Gods who stand above man in the various Hierarchies knew only of changes from one form of life into another. The actual event of death in life had not, up to the time of the Mystery of Golgotha, been an experience of the Gods. Death came as a result of Luciferic and Ahrimanic influences; it came, that is, through the agency of Divine Beings who had either remained behind in evolution or pressed forward too quickly. Death had no place in the life-experience of the higher Hierarchies. It enters into Their experience in the moment when the Christ passes through the Mystery of Golgotha — passes, that is, through Death, uniting Himself so deeply with the destiny of Earth Man as to have this also in common with him,- that He passes through Death. The event of Golgotha is accordingly more than an event of the life of Earth, it is an event of the life of the Gods. The actual event that took place in that moment on Earth, and the *knowledge* of the Event that finds its way into the hearts and minds of men — all this is an image of the infinitely more lofty and sublime and far-reaching Event that took place in the worlds of the Gods themselves. Christ's passing through death on Golgotha is an event whereby the First Hierarchy reached up into a still higher realm. Therefore have I always had to speak to you of the Trinity as standing above the First Hierarchy. In reality It only *came* there in the course of evolution. Everywhere there is evolution.**

And now the words, "In the Beginning was the Word . . ." of the Gospel of St. John can take on a living aspect once more. We are able, with Steiner's help, to understand the essential role that Christ played in the evolution of the Hierarchies when the "Word became flesh."

**[page 62] "In the Beginning was the Word." *Where* was the word in those distant ages, when mankind had a language of the will? The Word was with God, it had to be sought there by means of Intuition. "The Word was with God". The Archangels had to transpose themselves by means of Intuition into the Being of the Second Hierarchy. The Being that flowed over into Them was the Word. "And a God was the Word".**

**In the Beginning was the Word  
And the Word was with God  
And a God was the Word.**

**We see how intimate is the connection of that stream in evolution which finds its culmination in the Mystery of Golgotha with the Logos, the Word. And it is all bound up with the great cosmic event of man's "becoming" and the passage of Christ through death. When those great sentences were uttered: "In the Beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and a God was the Word"- in those days the Word was felt as moving and weaving in the *soul* of man. With the Advent of the Mystery of Golgotha came a time when Christ was present in a human *body* - men beheld Him through the Word. The Word had entered into physical man. "And the Word became flesh".**

The next lecture, "The Forming of Destiny in Sleeping and Waking," Steiner gave in Berne on April 6, 1923. Many people of a materialistic bent discount the events that take place during night time when we are in dreamless sleep. Having no way to report what happens is taken as logical proof that nothing happened. Nothing could be further from the truth.

**[page 67] The reason why the Ego and astral body cannot unfold consciousness of all the complicated circumstances in which they are immersed during sleep is that, at the present stage of the Earth's evolution, Ego and astral body have no organs wherewith to become aware of the happenings in which they are involved. Nevertheless these**

**experiences are undergone by the Ego and astral body during sleep and they work on into the life of day, into man's conscious life.**

Anyone who has raised children knows that children have no problem standing up many months before they are able to negotiate their way across the floor while standing. They seem to be performing a balancing act as difficult and fearful as someone crossing a tightrope strung from high above the floor. Animals have four appendages that can be pressed into service as feet, but humans have only two, and the first job of a child is to learn to distinguish from its legs and arms. The next job is to learn to maintain its center of gravity within its body because if it doesn't, it will fall down immediately. In watching an infant learn to walk, we can perceive something of its previous lifetime, of its *destiny*.

**[page 76, 77] It is wonderful to be able to perceive how the efforts made by a child when it stops crawling and begins to walk, when it first learns to achieve equilibrium — how these efforts represent the after-effects of the way in which, during the previous earth-life, the Ego was able, because of a universal love for human beings, to make a connexion, during sleep, with the Archai. This fact manifests now in the process of learning to walk and can be observed in the very details of the process.**

**Suppose, for instance, a little child continually stumbles and falls. This means that in a previous life feelings of strong antipathy or even hatred were harboured. No more than an approach was made to the Archai and the effect of the absence of any real connexion is expressed in the constant falls during the process of learning to walk. One who develops insight into such matters and sets himself the aim, let us say, of fitting himself to be an educator in the true sense by making close and careful observations of the way in which little children learn to walk, can indeed come to realise what a great and far-reaching task lies before him in the karmic adjustment of something brought over into the present life through the fact that in the previous life there was too little human love, or perhaps enough, but of a misdirected kind.**

Just after learning to walk, the next faculty to develop is that of speaking. Usually, any words spoken before a child learns to walk are basically one-syllable mimics of "Ma-ma" or "Da-da" -- sounds a parrot could speak better if taught.

**[page 69] The second faculty, that of *speaking*, is also acquired by imitation; the little child tries to imitate — just as he does with walking, standing, equilibration, differentiation between hands and feet. It can be said with truth, that speaking is not unconnected with walking, — above all, with the use of the hand in its differentiation. It is well known that speaking is connected with the specific development of an organ situated at the left side of the brain. This however only applies to people who use their right hand for the most important activities of life; in left-handed people the organ of speech lies at the right side of the brain. These facts indicate that what comes to expression in speech is connected with the search for equilibrium. Then, out of speaking, *thinking* develops.**

My wife Del and I just completed listening to Jim Dale read "The Order of the Phoenix" — the fifth book by J. K. Rowling in the Harry Potter series. In the middle of this latest story, Hermione Granger asks Harry to teach them defense against the dark arts, saying something like this, "We need to learn to defend ourselves from Lord Valdemorte." Ron Weasley gasped. Why? Because, up until that moment, Hermione had never said the name of the dark Lord aloud before, always using the euphemism, "He who shall not be named." Harry, on the other hand, had been saying "Lord Valdemorte" aloud from the beginning. What happened when Hermione spoke the words "Lord Valdemorte" was that her astral body carried out of her physical and etheric bodies the whole complex of fears that were embodied in the phrase and expelled them. As a result her soul and spirit were no longer cowed by the person represented by the name. Here is the passage that allowed me to comprehend this:

**[page 70] For when the human being is learning to speak, and even later on, too, when he is using speech in everyday life, the astral body carries with it, out of the physical and etheric bodies, the element of soul and spirit that is inherent in words and in speech.**

Earlier we talked about how dead abstract phrases actually disable our connection with the spiritual world and how important idealism was in maintaining that connection. Now Steiner reveals to us how words fly on the spiritual wings of idealism — if they have wings at all.

**[page 73] There is in the culture of the present day very little of what we call idealism. Our words relate entirely to things of the outer, material world. The voicing of ideals — which presupposes belief in the spiritual, for the ideal is a spiritual thing — is becoming rarer and rarer. Since in their waking life men do not unfold inner enthusiasm for ideals, they speak, in reality, of nothing but what is actually present in the physical world. More and more do their words apply and refer only to things of the physical world. . . . We are living in an age when words, as they emerge from the soul, lack the wings of idealism.**

I once wrote a poem about which I said at the time, I'll understand this later. It goes like this:

**Dreams have wings  
And other things  
That smile like butterflies.**

While reading this next passage about what happens during sleep if one during waking expresses no idealism in one's speech, I came to understand that poem. When one's speech has some idealism, one's words and dreams have wings that will create smiles when one is no longer earthbound as a caterpillar and becomes a butterfly.

If the quality of idealism is missing:

**[page 73, 74] the connexion — which is so necessary for the human being — to be made with the Archangeli; in such circumstances no order prevails during sleep in the intercourse which should be established between the human soul and the Hierarchy of the Archangeli. Yes, it is indeed the case that every night man loses the opportunity, if I may so express it, of union with the Archangel Beings. And it is difficult for him, then, to have the inner connexion with the spiritual world which enables his life between death and a new birth to be full of strong and vital experiences. The life of a man between death and a new birth is weakened when no idealism is expressed in his speech.**

Idealism in speech allows us to maintain the right connection with the Archangels, but what is it that allows us to maintain the right connection with the next level of the Third Hierarchy, the Archai?

**[page 75, 76] One quality alone brings the Ego, during sleep, into right connexion with the Archai, namely *true human love*, universal and unselfish love for human beings, sincere interest in every fellow man with whom life brings us into contact. I do not mean sympathy or antipathy, which are merely the outcome of something we are not willing to overcome. True and genuine love for human beings during the waking state leads us, during sleep, to the bosom of the Archai. And there, while the Ego is resting in the bosom of these Beings, *karma* or destiny is shaped. A verdict is passed: 'I am satisfied with what I have performed with my arms and legs.' And out of the satisfaction or dissatisfaction is born a power that not only plays a part in the period immediately following death, but continues on to the next earthly life — the power to shape destiny aright, so that true balance and adjustment are brought about in all those things which in one earthly life we have experienced in the Ego during sleep, in communion with the**

## Archai.

Karma is not just something that happens to us. Anyone who have ever woven a cloth knows that every thread, every stroke of the shuttle is important to the final material — it would be folly for the weaver to blame the final product on the thread used or some defect in the loom, as it was the weaver who decided which threads to use and what loom to use for the weaving. Remember the fairy tale of Rumpelstiltskin? While she was sleeping a short little man came in and wove gold out of straw for the beautiful girl. Each one of us has a weaver who can weave gold out of the straw of our lives, if only we will collect good straw during our waking lives. And our waking lives we have complete control over. Rightly understood, we each have complete control over our own karma.

**[page 78] You will remember what I have said in previous lectures: The soul-element of one earthly incarnation manifests in the physical in the next; the spiritual of one incarnation in the soul of the next. These connexions are as I have just described them. It will not do to generalise, saying merely that destiny and karma exist. What can be said, and with truth, is that we behold how the human being works at the formation of his own karma. He weaves it during sleep; but it is during waking life that he gathers what he needs for its texture. He weaves the threads that are formed out of universal human love — or he weaves threads which perpetually tear asunder and make bad karma for the next life, threads that are woven out of feelings of hatred for our fellowmen. Love and hatred — these are creative forces in the forming and shaping of karma.**

If one encounters a misfortune because of a previous weakness, one does best to welcome the misfortune as a chance to overcome the previous weakness. We should say, with Steiner, "It is good and right that this misfortune has come upon me, because it has enabled a weakness to be eliminated."

**[page 80] A man who bewails a misfortune which is really the consequence of a preceding weakness or failing, is not adopting the standpoint of true manhood, for the inference is that it matters not to him whether he remains weak or achieves some measure of strength. That man alone faces misfortune aright who says to himself: ' If it has occurred because of an earlier weakness, it is to be welcomed, for it will make me conscious of the weakness (which expressed itself perhaps in some definite failing); I will now eradicate the weakness, I will be strong again.'**

These four lectures give us a lot to ponder about our sense organs and our soul and spiritual lives. We live in a deep connection with the Hierarchies and we ignore that connection at our peril. We gather the straw during the day for our personal weaver and the cloth that results will be dross if the straw we gather is hatred for our fellow humans or the cloth can be golden if the straw we gather is love for all of humankind. The choice is ours. It is a choice we make every day of our lives. It is a choice that is woven into the material of our destiny every night as we sleep. It is the very essence of what we wish for others when we say those wonder-full words, "Good Night."



**The Sense Organs & Destiny**

Four Lectures by Rudolf Steiner

- **The Ear** (From Golden Age: 1930)
- **The Recovery of the Living Source of Speech** (From Golden Age: 1931)
- **The Sense Organs & Aesthetic experience** (From Golden Age: 1932)
- **The Forming of Destiny in Sleeping and Waking** (From Golden Age: 1933)