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A READER'S JOURNAL

**Freedom of Thought and Societal Forces,
GA#333**

by
Rudolf Steiner

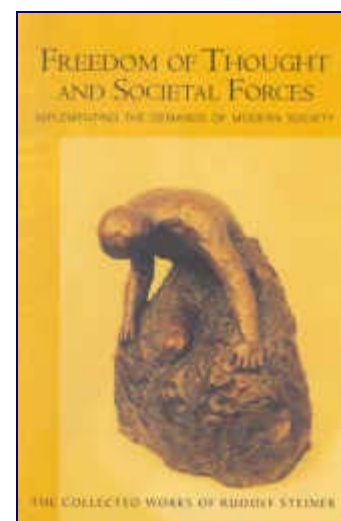
Implementing the Demands of Modern
Society

Six Lectures in May - December 1919

Translated by John Wood

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A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2009



It was with some trepidation that I undertook to read and review this book of lectures by Rudolf Steiner on the "demands of modern society." My minor agitation has to do with my access to Volitional Science⁽¹⁾ which was not available to Rudolf Steiner in his time, and is not, so far as I know, generally known in any detail by those whose generally study and write about Steiner's works. One example of the discontinuity of thought or dissonance I must deal with comes from the Introduction in which Chris Bamford writes:

[page xiii] Steiner could sympathize with the reality that, as a result of industrialization and "soul-destroying capitalism," working-class people found themselves forced into a life almost exclusively dominated by economic activity — i. e., living only to work for the pittance that enabled them to survive.

Clearly Steiner was referring to *soul-destroying implementations* of capitalism, but the idea that the implementation of capitalism was the source of the problem, not capitalism itself, is rarely acknowledged or discussed. Instead, the phrase "soul-destroying capitalism" is swung about like a sledge hammer intended to pulverize capitalism as an evil — as if there were no other form of capitalism to be discussed, in Steiner's time, our time, or ever. "Capitalism is soul-destroying" and the only solution is to destroy capitalism. Never has the phrase "soul-enlivening capitalism" ever appeared in any of Steiner's books or compilations of his lectures, and I have read over 157 of these, about. The very idea of capitalism as the solution for the soul-destroying effects of industrialization seems fantastic, but so do most dramatically new ideas seem, whether they be in art, science, or economics.

The ideas presented in Volitional Science will permit the building of freedom, one person at a time, regardless of where the person is located in the working population. Freedom, rightly understood, is something which can be built, and once built can not be destroyed. The implementation of technology offered in Volitional Science will create the culture that Bamford describes below:

[page xii] . . . the creation of a culture that will bring people together in creative, harmonious ways rather than segmenting them economically and promoting only the financial-cultural interests of the elites (corporate or intellectual).

Labor will not be able to be priced as a commodity in the *Natural Society*(2) implemented by the ideas and technology of Volitional Science. In order for labor to be priced as a commodity, human beings must be *fungible*, that is, of such a nature that anyone can be replaced by another, without distinction. No right-thinking human being considers that the members of their family could be replaced by the members of some other family, without distinction. And yet labor for centuries has been priced as if that were true for every worker, especially since the rise of industrial mechanization when each production line needed so many bodies to keep the parts flowing. Workers could leave their thoughts and ideas home when they went off to such factories. This was the soul-destroying part of capitalism, treating people as a commodity instead of as unique human beings whose very thoughts and ideas were important, both to themselves and to the factories in which they worked. But we live in a state of partial capitalism where only secondary property, namely fungible things, is respected. The result is that employees of a corporation can be incarcerated for stealing the things of a corporation, but the corporation can steal the ideas of its employees without retribution in most cases. It is this asymmetry which leads to the soul-destroying aspects of capitalism: its partial implementation, and the Natural Society will re-align that by providing a way to ensure that every employee's thoughts and ideas will be valued instead of stolen, as so often happens in our "soul-destroying" kind of capitalism(3).

Steiner sees the necessity this way:

[page 6] The cultural aspects of our society has been inadequately developed, and as a consequence we do not understand how to channel the increasing domination of the economy by technology in ways that would permit each individual a humanly worthy existence.

A "humanly worthy existence", it seems to me, would mean that one's life and all non-procreative derivatives of one's life would be respected by others. Consider a society in which everyone respects primordial, primary, and secondary property. One's life would not be subject to execution by anyone (there would be no coercive government). One's thoughts and ideas would be likewise respected as their primary property and would not be stolen, i. e., used by anyone else without permission. One's things constitute secondary property and they would like be respected(4). Basically the so-called government would disappear because no one supported it anymore, and a true government would arise which provided the functions of defense, justice, and other amenities of civilized life on a volitional basis to anyone who wished them. The so-called government would be exposed as coercive bureaucracy and be replaced by a true government which would not have any ability to infringe on a person's life, thoughts and ideas, and things. That would permit each individual a humanly worthy existence.

[page 9] People have talked and written about civil rights from many different perspectives, but if our observations and perceptions about them are based on reality, scholarly definitions make as much sense as "defining" the colors blue and red, which are readily accessible to anyone with normal eyes. Similarly, the rights to which all individuals are entitled simply by virtue of being human are evident to any alert human mind, and the minds of the modern working class are increasingly alert.

An operational definition has the advantage over any scholarly definition in that it is readily accessible to anyone's perception, to anyone of normal intelligence. That is the virtue of Galambos' definition of property as one's life and all non-procreative derivatives of one's life. One's offspring are not one's property as they are a procreative derivative of one's life. One's life can be considered as primordial property, one's thoughts and ideas as primary property, and every thing else as secondary property according to Galambos' operational definitions. Every thing that one owns is a result of some thought or idea one had, and thus it is secondary to the primary property which preceded it. Things are thus of secondary in importance to the primary property which proceed them, an aspect of dealing with property which comes to prominence in the ideas or primary property of Andrew J. Galambos and forms the basis of the Natural Society which will be built upon his primary property. If this primary property, which I can

only give you hints of, seems unimportant to you, consider this: it is not my property to give to you, but Galambos' property. I have myself paid dearly for access to his primary property, in terms of spending time studying them (my primordial property), concentrating my own thoughts and ideas upon them to determine their worth (my primary property), and spending my money (my secondary property) on tuition to his courses. Anyone who simply reads my words about Galambos's primary property no more owns them than does one own a new car by watching a TV commercial for it. There are yet many steps before one may drive that new car.

[page 11, 12] No matter how favorably we view labor contracts, so long as they establish wage relationships, workers will not be satisfied. A humanly worthy existence for all will result only when contractual agreements govern the joint output of supervisors and workers but not labor itself. Then the worker-supervisor relationship will be one of voluntary partnership. This is what workers basically hope to accomplish even though they may not yet be able to articulate it clearly. For the working class, the actual economic issue (and their actual economic demand) is to extricate labor from the circulation of goods in the economy and to establish it as a right within the second member of the social body, the legal or political system.

In Rudolf Steiner's time, there had to be a legal or political system, which meant then as it does yet today, a coercive bureaucracy, no matter how arrived at: by autocratic, monarchical, democratic, republican, or such means as we find around the world today. Any of such means which established labor in the fashion Steiner suggested it above would also have the right to revoke that establishment at any point. Only a system of true government, one in which coercion does not exist at any level, such as would exist in a Natural Society, could guarantee that separation of labor and keep humans from having their work treated as a fungible good or commodity in the economy.

The voluntary partnership of workers and supervisors can only come about when all one's thoughts and ideas are respected and valued as much if not more than one's time. When one spends an hour in a factory using one's hand to assemble a device, one is paid one-time for that hour. When one spends an hour sharing an ideas (primary property) with one's supervisor on how to make all devices thenceforth at half the cost, whether it be half the time, half the materials or half of both, then one will be paid a portion of the savings for every device made thereafter implementing that idea — in every factory that uses the idea. In other words, ideas will become treated as if they were as valuable as work, in fact, more valuable. One cannot find an example of this treatment of one's ideas in factories, because ideas as such are not treated as property. Copyrights and patents do not protect ideas, only certain incarnations of ideas. A mechanism which ensures protection of ideas awaits the implementation of the Natural Society and is revealed in Volitional Science Course V201 which I invested my time and money to learn about. All I can share about it here is that it will work and it will achieve the partnership Steiner was envisioning in the passage quoted above.

How are we to reach such a Natural Society? By definition it cannot come about by force because that would violate the operational definition of freedom spelled out by Andrew J. Galambos, "Freedom is the societal condition which exists when everyone has 100% control over non-procreative derivatives of one's life." Coercion or force is ruled out immediately by that definition, so how does society move from a coercive bureaucracy to a true government? Steiner asks on page 20, "Has anyone else introduced the idea of a self-liquidating government?" After taking notice that he was actually referring to a so-called government, i.e., a coercive bureaucracy, I say, No. And while I agree with his next "That is truly an unusual idea," the likelihood of that happening is about equivalent to Wal-Mart liquidating its business of its own volition. Businesses like Circuit City liquidate their businesses only when their customers choose volitionally to go elsewhere for their products. If we in a land controlled by a so-called government, a coercive bureaucracy, and all the lands around the world are simply interesting variations on coercive bureaucracies, where can one go? Spencer Heath is reported to have told Galambos once that, "Coercion in a society acts like friction in a mechanical system — you must do extra work to overcome it." A Natural Society would be dramatically better because it would operate without coercion, like a frictionless

machine, and thus be many times more efficient. But, how do we go from a coercive society to a Natural Society? The answer is similar to how customers put Circuit City into its current position of liquidation, they stopped coming into their businesses.

Any so-called government or coercive bureaucracy is like Wal-Mart or Circuit City, it needs customers coming into their places to do business. But, as Circuit City can attest, they are handicapped compared to the so-called government: they can *not* force customers to do business with them. Customers have chosen to go elsewhere to do business and Circuit City must liquidate. "That's fine," you say, "but we have only one so-called government and there's no where else to go." I agree that's true for some things, but not all things. What if you decided to stop interacting with the so-called government except when forced to? Consider the impact that would have on your so-called government, no matter where you live in the world. Over time, it would be forced to liquidate because it can no longer pretend to be serving its customers. Something similar to that happened in the Soviet Union after about 70 years of coercive rule. Unfortunately, when it happened there was no Natural Society building up to take its place and all the "soul-destroying" aspects of capitalism rushed in to fill the vacuum left after the Soviet rulership disintegrated.

[page 21] Anyone who says, "We must seize power!" is speaking in vague, theoretical terms. Seizing power without knowing what to do with it results in no progress at all. Go ahead and seize power. Power is for the birds if you have no inkling of what to do once you have it. *Before* coming to power, it is essential to be quite clear about what you intend to use it for.

Steiner could be talking about the transition which the people in the former Soviet Union experienced. People took power in various portions of the USSR with no inkling of how to create something better, so they simply got something different where some things are better and some things are different and some things are worse. Rightly understood, the power belongs in the hands of the people, by which I mean specifically and only "the individual". It is the individual customer who decides to buy from Wal-Mart or Circuit City, no one forces them to go one place or the other. The only effective liquidation of a so-called government is one in which volitional agencies have grown up over time to replace the function of the so-called government. When people begin to discover that the volitional government operates more efficiently, no one will have to force them to use the volitional agency, they will choose with their feet, and soon so few will be entering the so-called government to do business that it will have to close its doors. And, no one will miss it.

We see signs of this happening from time to time on a small scale in the USA, such as contracting out services for garbage collection, road and bridge maintenance, etc, and it usually happens that subsequently the so-called government gets scared of becoming unnecessary or redundant, so it passes a new city ordinance, a state law, or a federal law to force people to use their services, and so their problem is "solved" — the coercive bureaucracy survives to coerce another day.

We must not be wooed by promises that one part of an prospective government will be protected by some other part — protection is just a cover-up for the real reason, coercion.

[page 24] Similarly, labor needs to be extricated from economic conflicts and protected by an independent constitutional state.

It should seem strange to anyone that the Mafia is accused of running a "protection racket" when they force money from their victims in exchange for protection, and yet the so-called government which prosecutes the Mafia for their protection racket is running the biggest protection racket of all. We know it as the Department of Defense. It should seem strange to anyone that the agency designed to protect ideas, the US Patent Office, requires lascivious disclosure of ideas to everyone in the world and in exchange provides only paltry, and at times, non-existent protection. Japanese manufacturers scour US patents for new ideas, rush them to market, and when the inventor of the idea finally gets to market, there is a large

company refuting his claim for originality. Paying one's income tax is touted as the voluntary duty of every citizen, but try to exercise your so-called voluntary right and withhold paying your taxes and you'll be able to muse behind bars just how involuntary paying taxes really is. The only withholding you can do is the forced withholding of your taxes, often times as in cases of winning money, the withholding is a fixed amount with relationship to the amount you may eventually calculate.

What Steiner says about a threefold organization applies directly to the Natural Society. There will be a revolution without force, without guns, without coercion of any kind, and the seminal ideas of V50 and V201 which will nourish the change to a volitional society at all levels will not have to be understood by everyone, the majority of the people will simply do what they see their friends and neighbors doing which has become more profitable and healthy for them. Similarly our neighbors in the world community will not be very far behind us.

[page 24] Once a healthy threefold organism exists, it will revolutionize our circumstances. If it is adopted internationally, we will no longer need to trumpet world revolution, because the revolution will happen in a matter of course. Demanding revolution will not make it happen. It will happen only if we identify seminal ideas that will grow and bear fruit for all.

What can bear better fruit than the idea which creates an operational definition for freedom which everyone can agree on, once they have either understood its principles or have observed it at work successfully? For the first time one can adopt a definition which allows one to determine whether an action is moral or not by the simple expediency of asking the question, "Whose property is it?" and if the answer is "Not mine" then the action is immoral. No need for law courts to decide if an action is legal in such a society; each person can do so without outside help.

That does not mean there will be no problems in the transition to such a society in which harmonious social behavior will become the rule enforced from within instead of without. No, there will always be the inertia of the past dragging, slowing down the future. This happens because our attitudes and expectations change but our behaviors are so ingrained that we act automatically out of the old modes of behavior while we learn to practice new habits.

[page 25, 26] We are right to strive for more socially equitable conditions than have been our lot for the last three to four centuries, but we do so out of a very strange mentality. Essentially, modern human souls are full of antisocial drives and instincts that make mutual understanding almost impossible. Life as we know it is the product of centuries of antisocial attitudes and behaviors, and as we strive for greater social equity, we are still acting out of a fundamentally antisocial frame of mind!

The next idea which Steiner presents us with is that love is a natural result of the non-transparency of Nature to our direct understanding. This is exceedingly difficult to understand and explain, so I will offer a couple of quotes which seem to develop that theme before we look at Steiner's words on the subject.

This morning I received by email a poem-of-the-day with this quotation from a famous Sufi poet.

Love is the way messengers from the mystery tell us things. — Rumi

What is the mystery Rumi is talking about? Certainly Einstein received "messengers from the mystery" on his way to revolutionizing physics and the way we think about the world in which we live. One messenger took Einstein on a ride on a light beam to help him come up with his major achievement, the theory of relativity. Here's how Einstein describes the process of uncovering the mysteries hidden by the opaqueness of Nature:

"The state of feeling which makes one capable of such achievements is akin to that of the

religious worshiper or of one who is in love." — Albert Einstein(5)

Steiner reveals to us that mystery arises because Nature is not fully transparent to our understanding, adding that if Nature were transparent, there would be no love. Read how Steiner puts it for us. His meaning is difficult, but perhaps the above two quotes will help you, my dear Readers, to grasp his point.

[page 29] By struggling with the limits of natural understanding, spiritual researchers realize that our human constitution is uniquely adapted to life. As experience leads them to ask what prevents natural science from seeing into the essential character of the natural world, they discover a strange and shattering fact: If nature were fully transparent, with no limits, we human beings could not possess a certain faculty that we need for our life together between birth and death — namely, the faculty of love!

In other words, love is the key — a boon given to us in exchange for our having to accept the density of the physical world and its attendant non-transparency. Read on. . .

[page 29, 30] All love between individuals, the brotherly and sisterly love that warms our souls in social encounters with others, would be impossible if nature imposed no limits on our ordinary understanding.

This is a truth that cannot be proved logically, just as the existence or non-existence of whales cannot be proved logically. We believe whales exist because we see them. Similarly, we cannot "prove" that love would not exist if our natural understanding knew no limits. This truth, however, is a matter of direct experience for anyone who achieves a certain degree of spiritual cognition and "sees" the secrets that our human existence conceals. One such secret is that we gain the capacity for love by losing our initially unlimited natural understanding and vice versa.

Does not Einstein's feeling of love come because he had opened up our previously limited understanding of light in the natural world? Now, Steiner operates the process backwards to reveal that we must increase our capacity for love if we are to regain our unlimited view of the entire natural world, by which he means peering into and experiencing directly the spiritual world which in an integral part of the natural world, rightly understood.

[page 30] This insight, however, also reveals what we must overcome in order to gain access to the spiritual world that houses the inmost core of our being. This is one of the fundamental principles of all paths of spiritual development in general: If we are not to lose love as we transform our thinking into something more than the ordinary, we must increase our capacity for love-our loving devotion to all of the world's beings-above and beyond the love we bestow in ordinary life between birth and death. Preparation for the path of spiritual knowledge includes becoming much more capable of love than we need to be in our ordinary interactions with each other. In fact, we gradually become aware that as long as we occupy physical bodies, love is the only way our undivided human nature can learn about the world. Love is the only research method available to us.

We should tread lightly on this next point of Steiner and take care not to muddy our boots and car tires. He attacks the deepest claim of materialistic science, saying in effect that science thinks the impression left by the Hamlet's signet ring in sealing wax on the letter is the actual King of Denmark, and, like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, science will be led to its death because of that mistake. The brain is a recording medium for impressions left by spiritual beings, and no materialistic science can ever uncover that fact because they are searching, like Nasruddin under the street lamp instead of inside his house where he lost his keys, "because there is more light here."

[page 31, 32] At this point, we also recognize the grave error of both ordinary science and the views on thinking popular in our materialistic age. Science tells us that the brain is the instrument of thinking, but this is just as wrong as imagining that tire tracks and

footprints on a muddy dirt road develop from below as the result of underground forces. Clearly, that interpretation is ridiculous. Nothing in the makeup of the soil tells us anything about how these marks appeared, because they were imprinted from above by people and cars passing by. When we become familiar with body-free thinking, we recognize that ordinary science makes a similar mistake. The nerves and convolutions of the brain do not house forces that produce consciousness. They are merely imprints of a mental activity that is independent of the body. Mental activity leaves physical traces on the brain, but the body does not produce these traces; they are imprinted on it by an active essence.

In our human body in our time between birth and death, we have a facility for retrieving an event long past and remembering it. The process is much like having lost a limb, some member of our body, and we re-attach it to our body, we re-member it. This activity is unconscious to us, and we would expect it to work for events or revelations to us from the spiritual world, but it does not. Those revelations are stored not inside us, as our normal memories are, but in the spiritual world, so we cannot remember them, but we must re-retrieve them each time from the spiritual world. This can be doubly difficult because we often receive these revelations in lightning quick speed, they flash up and are gone immediately. We can, however, train ourselves to catch these glimpses of spiritual perception.

[page 32] One unique characteristic of spiritual perceptions is that they cannot be remembered in the ordinary sense of the word. When seers talk about the spiritual world, they cannot simply recall what they once saw, but must repeatedly recreate the circumstances that allow them to see it. But if spiritual perception is as fleeting and rapidly forgotten as a dream, it nonetheless contains a memory of a very significant sort.

Many people do not believe in karma, but even those people must have experienced meeting some new person and feeling an immediate distaste for that person, and later meeting another person and feeling an immediate rapport for that person. Likely, if asked, they would attribute that difference to coincidence, or some trivial aspect of the way the person talked or was dressed. In other words, they would respond *exactly* as a person who was operating under a post-hypnotic suggestion to remove their shoes when a key word was spoken by the hypnotist! When asked why they suddenly removed their shoes, the subjects invariably generate a plausible answer to explain their actions. If you, dear Reader, choose to ignore the presence of karma in your life, it will be as if you chose to continue walking around in a trance for the rest of your life.

[page 33] This insight also gives a completely new meaning to all of our human interactions. When we encounter people socially, we develop sympathy for some more quickly than for others. We develop a great variety of connections to other people during this life between birth and death. When we acquire a spiritual researcher's insight into life, we discover that anything that attracts us to one person or more or less alienates us from another — in short, any interpersonal connection we develop — is the consequence of experiences with that other soul in a different world, before we descended into our current physical existence. Everything we experience in the physical world is revealed as a reflection of experiences in the spiritual world.

What is mysticism? Those of you who imagine Rudolf Steiner to be a mystic will be surprised to learn that ordinary mystics experience illusions which arise solely from within themselves, "limited to impressions of the period since birth," even though they will talk about their so-called visions as being divine revelations. Steiner gives us the anecdote of the hurdy-gurdy or organ grinder to help us understand his point.

[page 34, 35] The following example from scientific literature is only one out of hundreds and thousands. A scientist is walking past the display window of a bookstore when his glance falls on the title of a book, and he breaks out laughing. There is nothing funny

about the title, so he cannot understand his sudden urge to laugh. He closes his eyes, thinking it might be easier to solve this puzzle without the distraction of the outer impression. With eyes closed, he hears something he did not notice before—the sound of a hurdy-gurdy in the distance. As he continues to listen, he identifies the melody as one he once danced to. At that time, he was paying more attention to his dance partner or perhaps to the dance steps, and so the melody made very little impression on him. That slight impression, however, was strong enough to recall later in life when he heard a hurdy-gurdy play the same melody again.

Spiritual researchers, being well aware of such instances and their true character, do not succumb to illusions. They know that mystical talk about experiencing the divine, eternal human being within sometimes has no more significance than a hurdy-gurdy melody. It is simply the recollection of past events that have been altered in subconscious memory. The paths of ordinary mysticism will lead you to nothing more than what you have already perceived. If you aspire to become only a mystic, you may succumb to terrible illusions.

Why is it that women who have been married to one man for over fifty years, suddenly develop severe loss of memory upon the death of their beloved spouse to whom they were devoted for many decades? I am personally aware of two cases in which this happened. Both women lived to serve their husband, and rarely had a life outside of taking care of their husband. Within a year or two of their husbands death, both women had severe memory loss. It is easy to see that the "I" of each of these women, so invested in their husband's "I", became incomplete when their husband died, and this precipitated the memory disturbances exactly as Steiner predicted would happen ninety plus years ago, before Alzheimer gave his name to the syndrome of memory disturbance(6).

[page 35] Disturbances of memory indicate that the "I" itself is disturbed — a terrible mental illness.

After pondering together how our ability to love arises out of the non-transparency of the physical world to our perception, we are presented by Steiner another mystery to ponder:

[page 35] Just as the limits of natural cognition allow us to *love*, our ability to *remember* is due to the impossibility of discovering the higher nature of the human being through inward-directed vision.

I will continue to hold this as an unanswered question, as the best I can come up with as a partial answer is that when humans attempt to find mystic visions within themselves, they search their own etheric bodies which contain all the events experienced by them between birth and the time of searching, which simply put is the process we call "remembering".

The remainder of the review I will devote to Chapter 6, "Spirit Cognition as a Basis for Action", a lecture given December 30, 1919 in Stuttgart, Germany by Rudolf Steiner, which he began by discussing the reason for choosing the name "Goetheanum" for his "college of spiritual science" in Dornach, Switzerland. Like Goethe stood out among the Germans as an intellectual who was internationally respected for a way of thinking that was infused with spiritual cognition. A major Goethean discovery was the Urpflanze or archetypal plant that "unites and underlies all individual plant forms." (Page 97)

[page 97, 98] In a noteworthy passage, he wrote that once having grasped this "sensible-supersensible" figure, as he called it, we could then modify it to invent an infinite array of imaginary plants possessing all the inherent logic and necessity of plants that actually exist out there in meadows and woods and on mountainsides.

When he wrote these words, Goethe sensed that his perception in this particular field of knowledge was approaching its peak. His statement tells us that he was attempting to develop a "spiritually appropriate" (as he put it) way of perceiving the natural world —

a means of acquiring knowledge, which engages not only the senses and human intelligence, but also the entire spiritual aspect of the human being. This type of cognition submerges itself in the essence of living things, becoming one with them to such an extent that the creative energy manifesting in plant growth in the outer world and the living energy at work in creating the corresponding "ideas" in the human soul are experienced as being one and the same.

In the above passage, Steiner describes Goethe's process, which resembles the "in-forming" which was used in the twentieth century by Barbara McClintock to do her Nobel Prize winning work in cytology, genetics, and microbiology, which continues to this day. It was how she developed her eponymous feeling for the organism(7). Note that "in-forming" is a process, a way of doing something, a way of acquiring information which transcends any data-collection process which utilizes only sensory perception; it is a process which requires the full human being, the most powerful instrument in the world. How can I make this claim? It is true because every other instrument is made by human beings, and no man-made instrument can ever rise to the abilities of the human being who creates it(8).

To this day, the only scientists who can see what McClintock saw through her microscope, are the few who have spend hours side-by-side with her at the microscope, learning her method of in-forming by adopting the process she used. The very difficulty of confirming the in-formation McClintock obtained delayed acceptance of her discovery of "jumping genes" until some purely materialistic scientist proved transposition of genes independently of her work.

It is this type of process which Steiner refers to as "spiritual cognition" that infused the life and work of Goethe and in our time, McClintock. It is the process, the world view, which the Goetheanum is devoted to teaching.

[page 98, 99] This approach to knowledge aspires to an extremely intimate sharing of experience with outer living things. By now, our cognitive processes are very different, so we underestimate how greatly Goethe's effort to achieve living ideas has impacted humanity's striving for knowledge. Our spiritual science, however, intends to be "Goethean" — not in the sense of compiling anthologies of what Goethe said or wrote on scientific subjects, but by taking up and developing Goethe's initial, elementary efforts so that they may become increasingly fruitful. . . . This can best be done by expanding Goethe's efforts-which were limited to the field of botany and, to a lesser extent, zoology-into the impulse behind a comprehensive worldview that, above all else, includes the human being. This new Goetheanism will transform the worldview that is emerging from our culture's most respected (that is, scientific) methods of acquiring knowledge.

Those scientific methods, with salient exceptions such as Einstein and McClintock's, are abstract ideas which simply mirror the physical world as we experience it with our senses.

[page 99] Let me refer back to earlier lectures and characterize civilized humanity's spiritual evolution over the last four centuries. During this period, intellectual, rational thinking emerged as the primary force in our collective development and our striving for knowledge. As the natural sciences experienced major triumphs and provided an abundance of scientific information on outer realities, our way of relating to the outer world — that is, the inner process of shaping ideas about the natural world and about our life — became thoroughly intellectual.

It is true that we enter a highly spiritual element when we allow ourselves to be guided primarily by the intellectual aspect of human nature. The abstract ideas and concepts we have cultivated over the last four centuries are inherently spiritual, but they are incapable of becoming anything more than reflections of outer, sense-perceptible realities.

The prevalent usage of dialectics as a process for reasoning in our time leads us further into abstraction, Steiner tells us. It helps me to understand my long-standing aversion to dialectical arguments. Steiner points to the evolution of consciousness, the change which occurred in the period of time from the spirit-filled thought of Plato to the abstract-logical thought of Aristotle, which carries over in our Aristotelian science today.

[page 99, 100] Since the fifteenth century, we in the Western civilized world have been entirely devoted to intellectual thinking. We find its prelude in the last few centuries before Christ, in the dialectics of ancient Greece. Dialectics involves the inner activation of an element of thought that leads to increasing abstraction. To an unbiased view of Greek life, this process (which was still very much imbued with spirit for Plato, but became mere logical activity for Aristotle) is clearly derived from an even older, completely soul-filled thinking.

Steiner calls history as we understand it today, a *fable convenue*, which less politely might be called a *convenient lie* used when the underlying truth is glossed over or otherwise forgotten. I am aware of at least one other time he used the phrase in December of 1919(9).

[page 101] If we are aware of the real evolutionary history of humankind (in contrast to the *fable convenue* we now call history), we will discover that in the Western civilized world, the ties binding human mental activity to blood ties were severed abruptly around the mid-1400s, when they began to be replaced by factors that can never be inherited. This change is apparent in all post-fourteenth century art, which has emerged from sources of human mental activity totally unrelated to even the greatest of the nature-based, elementally-tinged accomplishments of earlier times. The difference is evident in many artistic media.

A quick study of the difference between [14th](#) and [15th century](#) art will reveal that sometime during the early 15th century, perspective began to appear for the first time and the formerly flat religious images which focused on internal spirituality were replaced by realistic renderings of people and buildings in perspective. Along with gaining the more natural-looking images in our art, we have lost a vital aspect of our own humanity. Jesus has devolved in modern humanist thought to be just a man who can be rendered in realistic artworks, and each of us in turn has become just a man or woman, not a spiritualized being in a physical body upon Earth.

[page 103] The highly attenuated, purely intellectual mental life that has evolved since the mid-1400s has taught us to become independent of the merely natural element, but it has also distanced us from everything once considered essential to being human. A unique and even tragic feature has entered humankind's evolution. We have risen to a level of experience that is independent of natural, elemental forces, but these experiences no longer allow us to understand ourselves. In ancient, blood-bound spirituality, inner insight naturally included knowledge of the essential nature of the human being. Now, however, we have risen to an abstract level of spirituality that experiences great scientific triumphs but is incapable of exploring human nature.

The idea that human beings have no component of spirit, curiously enough, was begun by Church Fathers, not by atheists or humanists, and it was done during the 9th century. Steiner made the claim that Church art reflected the change brought about in 869 A. D. when the 8th Ecumenical Council declared that we have only body and soul, no spirit. He also noted that prior to that time, the universal artwork in churches was of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, but thereafter came the appearance of the Cross with Jesus crucified upon it(10). In the next passage Steiner gives the details on what that Council said.

[page 103] I know how reluctant people have become to hear such seemingly outlandish,

fantastical, and exaggerated descriptions. But if we are not willing to hear them, we will fail to develop fruitful ideas about how to renew and reorganize our life. To any unbiased view, such ideas are desperately needed. As for spirit and soul, although our academic philosophers still talk about the human "soul" in relationship to the outer world, any clear understanding of the human being as an entity of body, soul, and spirit has long since disappeared from our Western worldview. At this point we confront a very strange phenomenon. As I have said in many previous lectures, the triad of body, soul, and spirit is essential to understanding the true nature of the human being. The body serves as the spirit's instrument between birth and death; the soul is neither body nor spirit, but unites them both. Without a thorough grasp of this trinity, we cannot break through to a true understanding of the essence of human nature. Nowadays, however, even outstanding philosophers, who believe their scholarly efforts are unbiased, say that the human being consists of body and soul. They do not know that our intellectual activity is based on a long developmental history in the East. For example, in 869 A.D. the Eighth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople(11) decreed that, as Christians, we must believe that the human being consists, not of body, soul and spirit, but only of a body, and a soul with some spiritual attributes. From that time on, this statement became dogma in the Catholic Church and an underlying assumption in academic research. Today people who believe they are conducting independent research are really simply following the edict of the Eighth Ecumenical Council of 869, which abolished the human spirit by decree.

How do the changes in art and the loss of our spiritual nature influence us today? Isn't all this just ancient history? Yes, it is ancient, but it lives within us today and affects the way we live. We have spent centuries learning to think abstractly with our intellect, and now it is time for us to move on. Steiner explains in details why:

[page 103, 104] As a result of such influences, our mental activity has become so abstract and intellectual that it is no longer capable of engendering will impulses. In time, if our Western intellectual life becomes entirely materialistic, our ability to act will be completely paralyzed. The course of Western intellectual development must teach us the need for a spiritual renewal of our culture. We have lost any blood-bound insight into higher human nature and must now regain it from a different perspective. It was both necessary and right for humanity to spend three or four centuries developing the independent intellect. We achieved a certain freedom from natural constraints, but the resulting intellectualism must now be re-imbued with soul and spirit-with knowledge that informs and inspires human actions. Anthroposophical spiritual science has nothing to do with reviving the ancient methods of the East. Instead, it aspires to a modern means of learning about spirit. Anthroposophy wants to achieve a degree of intimacy with the life of the universe, which allows us to recognize the growth forces of the natural and spiritual worlds in our own bodies, as well as in plants and animals. If we imbue our intellectual activity with experiences of spirit, independent (rather than blood-bound) , spirit cognition will inspire and strengthen our actions.

Without spirit cognition and spirit perception, ethical activity will remain a distant goal for the majority of humankind. Why? Modern humanism with its abstract logical form of thought creates a world in which consciousness is a mere side-effect of the evolution of humans from the apes. The church leaders took away the spirit from the human trinity, and the scientific leaders strive to take away the soul as well.

[page 106, 107] Without spirit cognition our ethical impulses on behalf of Western culture are totally unfounded. Ethical impulses originate within and demand to be implemented in real life in a way that intellectual understanding does not, as a little unbiased self-observation will confirm. Ethical impulses or intuitions are very different from the intellectually formulated knowledge of modern science.

Our modern intellectualism, however, is unable to bridge the gap between our understanding of nature and our ethical activity. What has become of our ethical worldview as a result? Apart from religious views that are more or less devoid of content, the only other worldview available to us has been cobbled together on the basis of the natural sciences, and as such it is highly one-sided, although at least honest. According to this view, our world (complete with human beings and other living things) gradually developed out of a primordial mist through certain combinations of vortex phenomena. But what about human ethical ideals and intuitions? If we believe in natural combinations as the sole origin of all things, ethical intuitions are mere epiphenomena that are valid only as long as people think they are. If the many old instincts remaining from earlier stages of human mental evolution were eliminated from our inner life and not replaced, we would have to resort to outer confirmation of our ethical ideals. Instead of feeling that we owe our ideals to the spiritual life that transcends all physical life, our motivation for action would simply be the desire to appear respectable in other people's eyes, or to avoid breaking the law. In short, if the intellect remains dominant, we will lose any sense that our ethical activity is warmed and enthused by a soul-spiritual element. Ethical activity will be a reality only when spirit perception suffuses all of the mental processes we have acquired over the past three to four hundred years.

It is time for us to become cosmic gardeners. What is a cosmic gardener? It will help to understand what happens during the growth of a plant. A seed represents the growth forces of the next plant and the dying flower in which it appears is all that remains of the earlier plant. A cosmic gardener is someone who recognizes that one's ethical activity in this life creates the seeds of future evolution of humankind.

[page 107] In the natural world, we experience the dying legacy of earlier evolutionary phases; in the ethical ideals that come to life within us, we experience an element that will accompany human souls out into cosmic, eternal life when the Earth is cast off like so much slag or like a collective corpse. By cultivating our ethical activity, we sow the seeds of future metamorphoses of the Earth.

We are the product of our past and our ethical activities can plant seeds of the future for the cosmos. We are no longer limited to city-states as the Greeks were, nor to the continent as the pre-Colombian Europeans were, not even to Earth as modern thinkers would have it.

[page 108] Today we are called upon to become citizens of the cosmos in the truest sense, to feel not only that we belong to worlds that exist outside of our own yet form a whole with it, but also that we contribute to future worlds.

Through spirit cognition, our ethical views gain new roots. We will be able to transform ethics into an active force for social change only when spirit cognition lends strength to our ethical activity.

The normal way of controlling human beings is the use of fear and lies. For hundreds of years, we have been carefully taught to fear death and to ignore our existence before conception and birth, a lie which is useful because it defuses any questions about a future incarnation, i. e., reincarnation in a future human body on Earth.

[page 109] These centuries have taught us to think about the immortality of the human soul from a peculiarly egotistical perspective. Today, individuals tremble in fear of the possibility that they might cease to exist as soul-spiritual beings when their dead bodies are laid to rest. (That is not what happens, of course, but people fear it nonetheless.) Dogma forces us to focus entirely on life after death (the existence of which spiritual science fully corroborates, of course) while ignoring our existence as soul-spiritual beings in a spiritual world before conception and birth. The truth of the matter, however, is that before descending into the physical body provided through heredity, each of us

undergoes a period of development in a world of spirit and soul just as we do here on Earth. And just as life after death is a continuation of earthly life and builds on its experiences, the life we lead between birth and death is a continuation of life before birth.

What difference would accepting the idea of life before birth, practically speaking? Well, as Steiner points out, it makes a lot of difference if you as a teacher treats your young pupils as if they were blank tablets or as if they were wise and experienced human spirits with huge unknown potentials, newly arrived to learn about the Earth as it has changed since their previous incarnation.

[page 109] Being aware of life before birth arouses a totally different sense of responsibility, especially in teachers. It is no small matter to educate beings, who descend from eternal spiritual heights into human bodies, which they then shape to their own purposes more precisely with each passing year. Life before birth is the other half of the picture, the complement to the human soul's immortality after death, which we accept as a matter of course because it gratifies our egotistical desires. That is why spiritual science places so much emphasis on the fact that life here on Earth is a continuation of the life we lived before birth or conception. Focusing exclusively on the afterlife makes it easy to avoid worldly responsibility. If we take life before birth equally seriously, we feel an obligation to lead an active and effective life on Earth. Exclusive focus on the afterlife leads to a physical existence devoid of soul and spirit, but awareness of a previous existence in spirit before we descended into physical, sense-perceptible existence strengthens our will and pervades all of our life's activities. Only spirit perception offers a sound basis for human hopes for the future.

This next passage clears up a false impression one might have gotten from other sources that Rudolf Steiner was once in a monastery or became a priest. His discussion of how a Jesuit Father takes back his claim of Steiner being a priest is rather humorous and insightful.

[page 110] The Roman Holy Congregation of July 18, 1919 issued a general edict forbidding the reading of theosophical and anthroposophical writings — at least according to [the Jesuit Father Otto] Zimmermann's interpretation, and we cannot believe that the Jesuit Father always lies. That he does lie at times is evident from his assertion that I am a former priest, a deserter from a monastery, when in fact I never belonged to any monastery. Later he retracted this statement, saying it can no longer be substantiated — a strange way to correct a lie! I do not, however, believe that he is lying about the edict forbidding Catholics to read my books. Clearly, these opponents of ours have some inkling of the fact that anthroposophical spiritual science is attempting to introduce very real forces into modern life.

It came as a surprise to me when well into my forties, I discovered that my ancestors were German. I was not raised as a German, and I thought all my ancestors were French, as many of my grandparents still spoke Cajun French when I was a child. When my daughters visited Rosenheim, a German-speaking area of France and came back with a genealogy which showed me that my Matherne ancestors came to Louisiana from that region around 1721, suddenly a lot of things made sense to me for the first time. For example, why I chose to study physics in college, and why when I studied German, I kept making A's in it. I had never heard the language before, but I learned to speak it like a native. Something of my ancestors culture had entered my soul and led me to study the physical world and the language of my ancestors. Around that same age in my life, I also began reading Rudolf Steiner's lectures even though I didn't understand them a bit at first. Not until the tenth book of lectures did his writings begin to make sense to me — and yet I kept buying them and attempting to make sense of them. Those readings and the many books and lectures which followed led me to the path of studying the spiritual world which I had been earnestly seeking several decades after college as soon as the physics-only worldview had become dull and dead to me. It was as if I had heard this call out of the past from Rudolf Steiner:

[page 111] May the German people hear it now and in the near future; may they turn to spirituality to undo the terrible damage of recent years. In fact, the destruction is only beginning and will certainly continue unless we turn to the spirit in our efforts to rebuild our society and culture.

Today, let us appeal to the German people's will to cultivate spirituality. We are quite justified in issuing this appeal, because there can be no doubt that we will find spirituality if we simply look for it. As I said recently, the events of the last few decades suggest that the German people have no talent for materialism, whereas the spirit of centuries of German cultural development confirms our talent for spirituality. The call to spirituality must evoke a sense of great responsibility in us. May we become conscious of this responsibility in a way that allows us to contribute to humanity's evolution again by acting on our spiritual impulses. May we sustain, maintain and augment the accomplishments our greatest minds bestowed on a fortunate humanity for many centuries.

As I close this review, feelings of gratitude to Rudolf Steiner and those who have transcribed his lectures, translated them into English, and published them rise up in me. In particular, Steiner's writings on the threefolding of society has allowed me a forum for discussing the innovative ideas and technology of Dr. Andrew Joseph Galambos which will eventually bring the separation of the three folds of society into existence. Galambos taught in his volitional science courses that we are to work for the long term. Our building of freedom will lead to the Natural Society if we continue to strive to build freedom one person at a time. Each person who learns to operate in freedom according to Galambos's unique operational definitions will become a cosmic gardener whose dying flowers will bear the moral fruit of a new world.

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----- *Footnotes* -----

Footnote 1. In my review of [Sic Itur Ad Astra](#), the landmark book which reveals the basics of Volitional Science to the world, I give glimpses of ideas and technology which will bring "soul-enlivened capitalism" to the world. A complete study of Andrew Joseph Galambos V50 lectures (whose transcription fills the book) is necessary to appreciate and accept the new ideas which will make possible every aspect of the Three Fold Society which Steiner strove to have implemented during his time.

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**Footnote 2.** The Natural Society is a term originated by Galambos to describe this implementation of his ideas, and it will provide the threefolding of society that Steiner strove to implement by completely separating the cultural, economic, and justice aspects of society so that no one aspect can control the other.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 2.](#)

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Footnote 3. The ideas discussed herein are expounded more fully in my review of Steiner's [Toward Social Renewal](#).

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Footnote 4. Consider this: our present form of capitalism provides no protection for primordial or primary property and only partial protection for secondary property. It is this very limitation to secondary property which makes our only extant form of capitalism "soul-destroying". There has been no sustained form of capitalism in the history of the world which provided protection for all three forms of property — only Galambos in V201 proposes a practical way of accomplishing all three which will create "soul-enlivening capitalism" for the first time.

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**Footnote 5.** Quotation from page 118 of [A Feeling for the Organism](#) by Evelyn Fox Keller on the "Life and Work of Barbara McClintock.

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Footnote 6. Science, by naming, reifies a *process* into a *content* and then searches for chemicals to modify the content. But a process of "I" disturbance is as real as any named disease and can produce the very chemical disturbances which later research may find a way to undo chemically.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 6.](#)

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**Footnote 7.** For more details, see my review of the recent book, [A Feeling for the Organism](#), by Evelyn Fox Keller on the life and work of McClintock.

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Footnote 8. This is a key point, and one glibly overlooked by the same humanists who claim that Christ Jesus was just a humble man of Nazareth, robbing Him thereby of all divinity. To claim that instruments can be made more powerful than Man is to make a similar claim that every one of us, man and woman, have no spark of divinity within us. And yet, we endow our highest honors on those very humans, such as Barbara McClintock, who demonstrated this very spark of divinity in her work. [Return to text directly before Footnote 8.](#)

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**Footnote 9.** See his lecture on Dec 13, 1919, [The Michael Impulse](#) as referenced in my review of [From Beetroot to Beethoven](#).

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Footnote 10. My study and review of [Images of Christ](#) as well as several trips to Rome confirmed for me the accuracy of Rudolf Steiner's observation about the Cross appearing after the 9th century council.

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**Footnote 11. [page 119, 120 endnote] Page 103, "Ecumenical Council of Constantinople"**

**Canon II of the *Canones contra Photium* stipulates that the human being does not have "two souls" but *unum animam rationabilem et intellectualem*. The Council was called to condemn the Byzantine patriarch Photius, who upheld the need to distinguish between a lower and a higher, thinking human soul.**

**[Return to text directly before Footnote 11.](#)**

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