

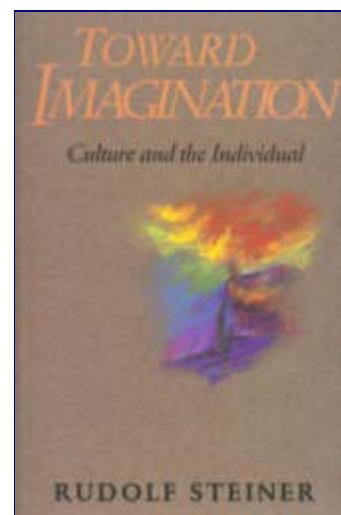
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A READER'S JOURNAL

**Toward Imagination, GA#169
Culture and the Individual
by
Rudolf Steiner**

7 Lectures in Berlin July, 1916
Translated by Sabine H. Seiler
Published by Anthroposophical Press in 1990
A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2005



The four bodies of the human being in the Earth Epoch are the physical body, the etheric body, the astral body and the "I" or Ego Body. One finds everywhere in the traditions surrounding Christmas the features of the etheric body. We bring into our homes a living tree which containing an etheric body so long as it is green. The reason we use an evergreen tree is because it evinces its etheric or life body even in the depths of winter. This is in keeping with the spirit of the Earth which awakens in winter when the natural world seems frozen and silent as if asleep.

[page 3] Christmas leads us into elemental nature; the lighting of the Christmas candles should be our symbol of the awakening of the spirit in nature. And if we want to understand the relationship between Christmas and human beings, we have to think of what connects us to nature even when we are spiritually separated from it, as in sleep when our astral body and our I ascend as spirit into the spiritual world. The etheric body, though also spirit, remains bound to the outer, physical body. Elemental nature, which comes to life deep inside the earth when it is shrouded in wintry ice, is present in us primarily in the etheric body.

The next festival in the calendar's progression is Easter and it is connected with our astral body. Our astral body was formed during the period of Moon Evolution (Old Moon Epoch) so it should not be surprising that the Moon plays a key in setting the date of Easter, which is the first Sunday after the vernal equinox. Our festivals are designed to remind us of a spiritual reality that most of us have forgotten in modern times. Instead of perceiving the reality behind the festival, we accept the festival as a symbol. It was not always that way, or the festivals would have never gotten started. No one can use a mere symbol to create a tradition which lasts thousands of years — if someone did such a thing, there would not be sufficient interest in the symbol to carry more than a few years or a lifetime or two. No, it is the deep spiritual reality which now may seem like a symbol, but in the beginning, back then, it was a perceivable spiritual reality which sustained the festival into a tradition.

[page 4] People would [back] then realize that the celebration of Christmas and Easter is also intended to remind us of our connection with elemental nature and with the nature that brings spiritual and physical death. In other words, the festivals are tokens reminding us that we bear a spiritual element in our astral and etheric bodies. But in our age these things have been forgotten. They will come to the fore again when people decide to work at understanding such spiritual things.

Fifty days after Easter comes the festival of Pentecost, which is generally, outside of church, the least celebrated or noted of the three festivals. It is the festival which celebrates the fourth and highest of the human bodies in this stage of evolution, the "I" or Ego Body. Here is a summary of the three festivals and related human bodies:

[page 5] Just as we can associate Christmas with the etheric body and Easter with the astral body, so Pentecost can be connected with the I. Pentecost represents the immortality of our I; it is a sign of the immortal world of the I, reminding us that we participate not only in the life of nature in general and pass through repeated deaths, but that we are immortal, unique beings who continually rise again from the dead. And how beautifully this is expressed in the elaboration of Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost! Just think, Christmas as we celebrate it is directly connected with earthly events it follows immediately upon the winter solstice, that is, at the time when the earth is shrouded in deepest darkness.

[page 5, 6] On the other hand, Easter is linked to the relationship between sun and moon and is always celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon in spring, that is, the first full moon after the twenty-first day of March. We fix the date of Easter according to the relative position of sun and moon. You see how wonderfully Christmas is connected with the earth and Easter with the cosmos. Christmas reminds us of what is most holy in the earth, and Easter of what is holiest in the heavens.

Our Christian festival of Pentecost is related in a beautiful way to what is above the stars: the universal spiritual fire of the cosmos, individualized and descending in fiery tongues upon the Apostles. This fire is neither of the heavens nor of the earth, neither cosmic nor merely terrestrial, but permeates everything, yet it is individualized and reaches every human being. Pentecost is connected with the whole world! As Christmas belongs to the earth and Easter to the starry heavens, so Pentecost is directly connected to every human being when he or she receives the spark of spiritual life from all the worlds. What all humanity received in the descent of the divine human being to earth is given to each individual in the fiery tongues of Pentecost. The fiery tongues represent what is in us, in the universe, and in the stars. Thus, especially for those who seek the spirit, Pentecost has a special, profound meaning, summoning us again and again to seek anew for the spirit.

Someone once said that there are two kinds of people in the world, those who divide the world into two kinds of things and those who don't. Steiner divides our physical being into two kinds of substances: blood and nerves. While this may seem rather simplistic, upon further inspection, it bears fruitful insights across a wide variety of topics. Let us look first at a summary of the attributes of these two substances and then inspect how Steiner describes each attribute in detail. He characterizes blood and nerves like the opposite poles of a magnet.

Blood	Nerves
Metabolism	Senses
Inner (inside the skin)	Outer (outside the skin)
Earth substance	Pre-Earth substance
earthly	cosmic
death —> life	life —> death
luciferic	ahrimanic
unity	atoms

[page 27, 28] Of course, you may say that at first glance there are all sorts of other substances too, muscle tissue, bone matter, and so on. But all these substances are actually built up from blood, as you will see when you study them more closely. Thus, their existence does not contradict that we have primarily two substances in us, blood substance, or blood material, and nerve substance.

One of the differences between these two substances can easily be observed; you need only consider that everything connected with the blood is involved from the inside, so to speak, in our metabolic processes. Though generated as a result of external influences, our blood is produced within us, and it in turn generates what is necessary for physical existence.

On the other hand, the most important nerves show themselves to be continuations of our sense organs. For instance, in the eyes you find the optic nerve continuing behind the eye and merging

with the nerve substance of the brain. Similarly, all nerves are really continuations of our sense organs. The processes taking place in them are more or less the result of outside influences, of everything working upon us from the outside. We can say that just as magnets have two poles and just as we have positive and negative electricity, so the blood and the nerve substances are the two poles of our physical being. And these two kinds of substance are inwardly very different from each other.

[page 29] Our nerve substance is not of the earth, but the blood substance is of the earth. Nerve substance originated in processes that took place before the formation of the earth. Our blood substance, and everything that streams and flows in it, has its origin completely in earthly processes. Our nerve substance is absolutely extraterrestrial, so to speak, and woven into us as something cosmic; it is related to the cosmos.

Our nerve substance is dead because of the influence of earthly forces, but would be a "marvelous, living, vibrant being" were it raised above the influence of those forces. "Our nerve substance, then, is alive in the cosmos and dead on earth." (Page 30) Here we see the polar nature of blood and nerves as it relates to transitions from life to death forms of substance.

[page 32] Our nervous system is actually destined for life in the cosmos beyond the earth but is dead inside us; our blood, on the other hand, is meant to be dead in us and receives its life from outside. In a sense, the nervous system yields its life to the blood. Thus, the nervous system is dead while the blood is alive, comparatively speaking. Our blood is by its very nature dead on earth and has only a borrowed life, a cosmic life forced upon it. Life itself is not at all of our earth. That is why the nervous system must take death upon itself in order to become earthly, and why the blood has to become living to enable us as beings of earthly substance to turn to the world beyond the earth.

Now we can home in on the relationship of blood to Luciferic forces and nerves to Ahrimanic forces. "Death is the kingdom of Ahriman," Steiner tells us in his cycle of lectures in Munich in August, 1913 (Published as [Secrets of the Threshold](#)), and in the next passage he explains the polar relationship of the blood and the nerves further.

[page 32, 33] Thus, because our nervous system lost its life in its descent into the earthly sphere, we carry an ahrimanic element in us. And because our blood is alive — though by its very nature destined for death, that is, for mere chemical and physical processes — we have a luciferic element in us. Ahriman can exist in us because our nervous system is dead, and because our blood is alive, Lucifer can live in us. Now you can see the significant differences between these two substances; they are polar opposites, just as the North Pole is to the South Pole.

In Mel Gibson's movie "The Passion" we witness the terrible agony of Jesus in the last hours of his life. Part of the agony Jesus experienced during that time was because he was a human being into whom the Christ Being had entered. Even the most perfected human body could only contain the Christ Being for a maximum of three years, as Steiner mentioned in several of his lectures. Here we are led to understand why this was the case.

[page 33, 34] Long ago, in the Lemurian epoch, or in the course of earthly evolution in general, we descended and have connected our evolution with the earth. But by entrusting the development of our nervous system to the earth, we have consigned it to death and left its life behind in the cosmos. That life we left behind later followed us and descended in the Christ Being. In other words, the life of our nerves, which we have not been able to bear in us ever since the beginning of our earthly existence, followed us later in the Christ Being. And what did that life have to lay hold of in earthly existence? It had to lay hold of the blood! That is why we talk so much about the mystery of blood.

Our nervous system lost its cosmic life and our blood received a cosmic life, that is, life became death and death became life. They live separately in us. Yet, a new connection between them was achieved when the life of our nervous system, which had been left behind, descended to us from the cosmos, became human and entered the blood, which in turn united itself with the earth, as I have explained before(1). And now we as human beings can reconcile the contrast between blood system

and nervous system through our participation in the Christ Mystery.

As a physicist, I can take the last row in the table myself, the one about atoms. What are atoms? They are fictions made up by physicists to describe how components of the material world combine together, first to form chemical compounds, then more and more complicated molecules up to proteins and DNA. Fictions — very useful and convenient fictions, but fictions nevertheless. The more we have learned about the so-called structure of atoms, the less simple we have found them to be. What was once thought to be the simplest form of material substance is now thought to contain a proliferating set of sub-atomic particles. Usually when an assumption leads to such proliferation, we recognize that our assumption is wrong. If we did that appropriately with atoms, we would say, "We were wrong about the existence of atoms." We could say that as physicists and yet keep the concept of atoms as a convenient fiction. And yet this will not happen so long as scientists have a nervous system built of tiny "atoms" because we will project our own innate structure upon the universe we find ourselves within. Steiner says it very clearly: we see atoms in the world because our nerves are atomistic in nature. On the other hand, religion and mysticism look for unity because they come from our blood. This completes our expanded look at the above table.

[page 34, 35] For instance, there is the material science of the outer world. It has found its culmination, its goal, in present-day natural science, which sees the world as built up out of atoms. These atoms, however, are pure fantasy; they are simply not to be found out there. Why then do we talk about atoms? Because we have in us our nervous system built up out of little globules, and we project this structure on the world outside. The world of atoms out there is nothing but a projection of our nervous system! We project ourselves into the world and thus think of it as consisting of atoms, and of our nervous system as composed of many individual ganglion-globules. Science will always tend to atomism for it originates in nerve substance. By contrast, mysticism, religion, and so forth come from the blood and do not look for atoms but always for unity. These two opposites are in conflict with each other in the world. We do not understand their conflict unless we know it is really the struggle in us between nerve substance and blood substance. There would be no conflict between science and religion if there were none in us between nerve and blood substance.

One cannot study spiritual science the way one studies materialistic science — I have no doubt about that since I came to spiritual science from the perspective of a physicist. Once I understood how the physical world worked, I wanted answers to big questions about the world which physics always leaves untouched. In Rudolf Steiner I found someone who reasoned like a scientist and explained things like a scientist and actually had answers to my big unanswered questions. Every book or lecture cycle of his I pick up to read contains answers to some unanswered question I have held for many years, mind-boggling answers to my big questions which I receive with warm enthusiasm. Here is an answer, I say to myself, which finally makes sense to me about how the entire world operates, not just the atomistic one I was academically trained to understand. It is this spiritual science I refer to that Steiner named *anthroposophy* — the science of the complete human being and the cosmos. To understand anthroposophy as one would physics would be to completely miss the point — one would thereby lower anthroposophy to the abstract empty realms of physics and chemistry.

[page 35] There are many among us who listen to the teachings of anthroposophy and accept them as they would accept conventional science. As a result, many people see no difference between anthroposophy and ordinary science. But we understand anthroposophy rightly only when we grasp it not just with the head, but allow every one of its utterances to kindle our enthusiasm and to live in us so that it finds its way from the nerve system to the blood system. Only when we take warmly to the truths contained in anthroposophy do we really understand it. As long as we approach it abstractly and study it as we study the multiplication tables, an arithmetic book, instruction manuals, or a cookbook, we do not understand it at all! We cannot understand anthroposophy if we study it in the same way as chemistry or botany. Only when it generates warmth in us, replenishes us with its own vibrant life, do we begin to really understand it.

There is, as well I know, no Christ in physics. Nor in chemistry or physiology. There is not even a path for transition from these materialistic sciences to Christology (knowledge of Christ). When we comprehend the life that our nerve substance left behind in the cosmos when it entered the earthly realm, we find the transition from physiology to

Christology. In effect, we are relegated to a materialistic life infused with solely ahrimanic or deathlike nerve substance until we accomplish this transition.

[page 36] My talk began like a conventional scientific talk, maybe one about anatomy or physiology, by looking at the substances in the human being, but now we find the transition to the loftiest knowledge we can have on earth: to Christology. You cannot find this transition in any other science. Spiritual science shows you that our nerve substance lost something in becoming earthly substance. But where is what our nerve substance lost? When Jesus of Nazareth was thirty years old, Christ entered his body and went through the Mystery of Golgotha. Try to warm yourselves through and through with this thought. What is lacking in our nervous system because we are living on earth, what has been replaced with an ahrimanic element, is what we find in the Mystery of Golgotha.

Have you ever been enthused by anything? From personal experience I know that it is possible to be enthused about the cold abstract thinking of physics — but only for a time. A foundation for a building is cold and hard, but one can be enthusiastic about pouring the foundation because it is to be the basis for a home full of love. Physics was that way for me — a foundation. Now its abstract realms leave me cold, but I am warmed by the spiritual science which I have worked earnestly to construct upon its foundation.

[page 37] The relationship between nerve substance and blood substance in our organism is the same as that in our soul between abstract, cold thinking and the enthusiasm we can feel when things do not remain merely cold thoughts for us, but warm us through the spirit. This warming through the spirit does not come naturally; we have to train ourselves to attain it.

In the ripeness of time the Christ Being came to Earth in the body of Jesus and flowed into the Earth and gifted us human beings with what we had left behind in the spiritual world. If we had received this gift in the beginning we would have never found freedom — we would have remained spiritual robots. If we had *never* received this gift, we would have remained free, but soulless and amoral, destined only for death and dust as materialistic science would have it. The Fall in the Garden was a grand experiment, actually a Leap for Humankind into freedom. To use a crude analogy, we were like a teenager given the keys to an automobile. We bumped into things and had problems before we were given driving lessons so that we could learn to balance our freedom with responsibility. Freedom cannot develop out of responsibility: one must first have freedom and then develop responsibility. Freedom is a gift from the spiritual realms and responsibility a task for us on Earth.

[page 37] Now you can see in spiritual and physiological terms as it were, what the Mystery of Golgotha accomplished. What we had left behind in the cosmos followed us. It can now once again permeate our soul, because it did not permeate our body at the beginning of our earth existence, or we would have become automatons of the spirit. As it was, we went through a period of evolution on the earth before we were to be ensouled by what did not permeate our body right from the very beginning. This great and wonderful connection reveals the activity of the spiritual in matter.

We are not speaking here of the general, vague spiritual element woolly-headed pantheists speak of so glibly, but of the specific and definite spirit we see undergoing the Mystery of Golgotha. That is what I meant when I said that the general truism that all matter is a manifestation of the spiritual really does not say very much. We know something only when we know in detail how a specific, physical being manifests the spiritual. The findings of conventional science are an abundance of facts and material just waiting to be permeated with spiritual understanding. Spiritual understanding can penetrate them so deeply that even the most material science of all can be connected with Christology.

In Lecture 3, "The Twelve Human Senses" Steiner discusses our twelve senses, expanding what he revealed about them in two other lectures cycles [\(2\)](#) to describe the day and night senses. To grasp this, one must look at the zodiac which divides the sky around the Earth into twelve regions, each marked traditionally by a constellation or sign. At any one time, the Sun is either above or below the horizon and one is either in day time or night time. When you are in day time, there will be six of the twelve signs in the day sky and the other six will be in the night sky on the

opposite side of the Earth from you. Similarly your twelve senses are divided into six day senses and six night senses. The Table of Day/Night Senses is a summary of the human twelve senses which shows which are Day, which are Night — which operate Within us and which are Outside of us.

Day/Night	Within/Outside	Twelve Senses of the Human Being
Night	Within	<i>Touch</i> - the internal response to a contact with the outside world
Night	Within	<i>Life</i> - this sense is the internal feeling of well-being, of being alive
Night	Within	<i>Movement</i> - being inwardly aware of the way body parts move in relationship to each other
Night	Within	<i>Balance</i> - this sense orients us to the world with respect to up, down, right, and left
Night	Outside	<i>Smell</i> - the sense that allows one to come in contact with the outside world via odors carried by the air
Night	Outside	<i>Taste</i> - a deeper connection with the outside world in which flavors are directly sampled
Day	Outside	<i>Sight</i> - the sense that takes in the exterior images of the outside world
Day	Outside	<i>Warmth</i> - with this sense we are aware directly of the warmth of another body
Day	Outside	<i>Hearing</i> - this sense can tell us more about the inner structure of an object than sight. When an object resonates, we learn about its deep structure from the sound we hear.
Day	Outside	<i>Speech</i> - the sense of <i>speech</i> or <i>word</i> or <i>tone</i> - which is the hearing that involves meaningful words
Day	Outside	<i>Thought</i> - this refers to the deeper sense of entering the being speaking through their words
Day	Outside	<i>Ego</i> - this is the sense of <i>ego</i> or <i>I</i> which enables us to turn our thinking towards the being of another and to behold their I, their unique individuality directly

The two references linked in the footnotes contain excellent summaries of the twelve senses in addition to the summaries in the text of Lecture 3. I will focus on several new aspects of the senses he elaborates upon here. The first deals with the lack of recognition by psychology of a sense of speech. In his lectures compiled in [The Sense Organs & Destiny](#) he explains that comprehension of words with our ears requires an ability to speak the words. Here in Lecture 3 Steiner reveals that our organ of speech reveals much more than what is contained in the words. In the passage below, I have italicized a sentence which inspired the poem which is included below.

[page 55] The opening sentence of a psychology book by one of the foremost philosophers of our time starts by denying the existence of the senses of speech, thinking, and the I. He knows nothing about them. Imagine, here we have a case where absurdity and utter nonsense must be called science just so these senses can be denied.

If we do not let this science confuse us, we can easily see its mistakes. For this psychology claims we do not see into the soul of another person but can only guess at it by interpreting what that person says. In other words, we are supposed to interpret the state of another's soul based on his or her utterances. When someone speaks kindly to you, you are supposed to interpret it! Can this be

true? No, indeed it is not true!

The kind words spoken to us have a direct effect on us, just as color affects our eyes directly. *The love living in the other's soul is borne into your soul on the wings of the words.* This is direct perception; there can be no question here of interpretation.

Words, rightly understood, comprise the vehicle which transports the soul meanings from one person to another. There is much more carried by words than can be found in their dictionary meanings. This poem helped me to express what I felt as I read the above passage.

On the Wings of Words

Love is borne from soul to soul
on the wings of words.

No dictionary can reveal
the meaning of
The words that fly soul to soul
on the wings of love.

No transcription can reveal the warmth
of love that flows
When
Love is borne from soul to soul
on the wings of words.

No philosopher can explain
the magic of
The words that fly soul to soul
on the wings of love.

If you wish to share the love
a'borning in your heart
If you wish to span the gap
keeping you apart

Fill your words with Love
and send them flying o'er
For
Love is borne from soul to soul
on the wings of words.

The second thing I wish to highlight from this lecture is how we move as human beings through our day and night senses.

[page 55] Now picture the rising sun, the emergence of the light, the setting sun. This is the macrocosmic picture of our microcosmic inner life. Though it does not move in a circle, our inner life nevertheless proceeds through the twelve signs of the zodiac of the soul, that is, through the twelve senses. Every time we perceive the I of someone else, we are on the day side of our soul-sun. When we turn inward into ourselves and perceive our inner balance and our movements, we are on the night side of our inner life.

The arrangement of our senses are important to know when we are living, but especially important when we are spiriting(3) because they are reversed. With the help of the above Table of the Twelve Senses, you will be able to decipher what Steiner discusses below. This table can provide a map for the world between death and a new birth.

[page 55] Now you will not think it so improbable when I tell you that in the time between death and rebirth the senses that have sunk deeply into our soul's night side will be of special importance for us because they will then be spiritualized. At the same time, the senses that have risen to the day side of our inner life will sink down deeper after death. Just as the sun rises, so does our soul rise, figuratively speaking, between the sense of taste and the sense of sight, and in death it sets again. When we encounter another soul between death and a new birth, we find it inwardly united with us. We perceive that soul not by looking at it from the outside and receiving the impression of its I from the outside; we perceive it by uniting with it.

In the life between death and rebirth, the sense of touch becomes completely spiritual. What is now subconscious and belongs to the night side of our inner life, namely, the senses of balance and movement, will then become spiritualized and play the most important part in our life after death.

In fact, just as Sun moves through the twelve signs of the zodiac in the course of the year, gliding from Aries to Libra during the warm days of summer and from Scorpio to Pisces during the cold days of winter, so do we humans move from one pillar of the world to another as we move from life to spirit and back. These two pillars have been known for thousands of years and were emblazoned on the two columns in the front of Solomon's Temple(4). Steiner describes these pillars or transition gates for us:

[page 56, 57] We enter earthly life through Jakim, assured that what is there outside in the macrocosm now lives in us, that we are a microcosm, for the word Jakim means, "The divine poured out over the world is in you."

The other pillar, Boaz, is the entrance into the spiritual world through death. What is contained in the word Boaz is roughly this, "What I have hitherto sought within myself, namely strength, I shall find poured out over the whole world; in it I shall live."

Do you wake up in a cheerful mood every morning? Steiner had mentioned in some earlier lectures that if one is healthy, one will wake up feeling good every morning. In this passage he gets a little more specific by giving the reason for a non-cheerful wake-up and points to a time frame of one and a half hours for the amount of non-cheerfulness after awakening.

[page 78, 79] We are actually constantly being depleted, being consumed, by the activity of our I, and when we sleep, we have to regenerate ourselves.

That is why we often notice that something ascends, as it were, from our physical organism when we wake up. These are the regenerating forces, the restoring forces. When we have something pathological or diseased in our organism, even if only very slightly so, that also ascends. As long as our organism is healthy, it regenerates itself in a healthy way by the time we wake up. However, if it is sick, it works to expel the sickness upward. That is why many people and even children are in a bad mood and not cheerful when they wake up. The aftereffect of what is coming up out of the organism is still there. What spiritual science tells us about the human being and human life agrees with the phenomena of life in a wonderful way. It is only about an hour and a half after waking up that we are completely free of the forces of sickness that can rise up. This is how our I and physical body interact. This interaction plays itself out in the rhythm of sleeping and waking: building up, breaking down, building up, breaking down.

The process of breaking down moves from the I to the astral which then breaks down the etheric body and the etheric body which breaks down the physical body. The effects of the astral body on the etheric body can be observed during the course of one's life. The stronger the passions and emotions expressed during the course of life, the more one's etheric body is worn down. One can see this in the painting of Botticelli's Venus. Steiner mentions the long neck and shape of her chest. For myself, I see it in the sad expression in her face and eyes. This is not a woman who will live very long. One could argue this is only an artist's rendition, but Botticelli was a great artist, and a spiritual scientist will confirm this is an image of a woman suffering from consumption. Even if Venus were drawn from a model, it was Botticelli who chose such a woman. (P age 82, 83)

Everyone has seen a skeleton of a human body hanging in a classroom or in a movie. It is usually supported by the

head and hangs down from there. One has also heard of people being told they have a "moon face". Steiner pulls these two items together to explain to us that everything hanging down from the head developed during the Earth phase of evolution and the current shape of our head corresponds to the human shape at the end of the Moon phase of evolution.

[page 84] Remember the public lecture I gave in the *Architektenhaus* this winter where I said we have to distinguish first of all between two parts of our physical body: our head and the rest of our body. When you look at the human skeleton, you'll see the head standing out clearly, distinct from the rest of the body. In that lecture I said that, roughly speaking, everything "hanging" from the head basically developed on earth. The condition of the human being at the end of the Moon phase of evolution, at the transition to the earth is retained only in the shape of the head. The head is a considerably older organ than the rest of our organism. The head is our oldest, most venerable part. The earth added all the rest to the head—that is, not quite all, but roughly speaking all the rest; we have to approximate these things.



Another old expression is, "He has a head of his own." Steiner explains in several other lectures that one's head in this incarnation was formed out of the rest of one's body from one's previous incarnation. This gives rise to various shapes of heads we see. One's head is as unique as one's life and body were in one's previous incarnation.

[page 85] No skull is exactly like any other, for our skull is the result of our previous incarnation. The rest of our organism prepares the skull we will have in the next incarnation. Craniologists and phrenologists quarrel among themselves because they insist on generalizing where they ought to individualize. Well, every one has a head of one's own!

Steiner takes on Vaihinger, a philosopher, who wrote a book entitled, "The Philosophy of As If." I read his book about 25 years ago and thought it was an insightful look at the fictions of physics and other sciences. What I did not notice was how Vaihinger's destruction of ideals laid waste his own field of endeavor. This recursive nature of Vaihinger's endeavor did not escape Steiner who was still alive when Vaihinger was.

[page 91] There was a man — and he is still alive — who wanted to prove philosophically that ideals are nothing real, nothing vital. He simply wanted to make allowances for the modern view that will let ideals stand at a pinch but considers them as not really existing in the way physically perceptible things do. By the same token, this man was a philosopher and thus would have had very little to do if he did not let ideals stand. After all, the physical realm is already taken care of by the other sciences, and there must be something left for the philosopher to do.

A philosopher deals with ideals like a child plays with dolls, Vaihinger says. The child knows the doll has no life of its own, and yet plays with it. "Why should we reject ideals when children do not reject dolls?" This analogy of Vaihinger's is exposed by Steiner and simply laid to waste.

[page 92] The child would hardly play with the doll at all if it did not in some way resemble or represent a living being. This is the precondition. Clearly, then, we can hardly compare the doll to an ideal unless we also assume the ideal is after all a representation of something real and alive. This philosopher's first nonsense is to use this analogy.

But there is another nonsense at work here. The second nonsense is this: Vaihinger claims we should base our life on ideals *as if* they existed, but then claims they do not exist.

[page 93] The analogy does not hold water because the comparison to a doll does not work: dolls are at least representations of living beings; ideals, on the other hand, are not supposed to represent anything. But even if they did, they would only lead to an imitation of life, not life itself.

When someone tells us we should achieve a balance in life, does that mean we should be stagnant and dormant like a scale which has nothing in it, but merely sits upon a shelf gathering dust? I think not, and neither does Steiner. He leads off his lecture on "Balance in Life" with this theme of dynamic balance in which the balance is achieved over time by a careful moving between one side of the scale and the other.

[page 99] Anyone who says that we simply have to guard against everything ahrimanic and luciferic is in the same position as people who say they want a scale, but don't want to put weights on either side. For instance, we know there would be no art if the luciferic element did not play a role in the world. On the other hand, we also know there would be no observation and understanding of nature if the ahrimanic element did not play a part, too. It is only a matter of establishing a balance in the human heart and soul.

And yet we hear voices of people who would avoid anything ahrimanic (such as watching television) at all costs. They consider such products of humankind as the work of the devil and evil incarnate. On the other side we hear voices of people who belittle the fundamentalist sects and their strongly-held luciferic beliefs. They should note that when one pushes down on one side of a balance scale, the other side is raised up.

[page 99] And that is why we can fall prey to the ahrimanic and luciferic elements just when we think we are rejecting everything ahrimanic and luciferic. We can sin against reality, but we cannot suppress it!

Thus, those who want to avoid everything ahrimanic will easily fall prey to the luciferic, and those who are trying to avoid the luciferic will be easy prey for Ahriman. The point is to find the balance, to fear neither the one nor the other, and to have enough courage to face both ahrimanic fear as well as luciferic hope or desire.

When we encounter an extreme on either side, we must be brave enough to examine our own lives for some component of that extreme, so that by confronting it in ourselves, we may move our own scales dynamically into balance. We are human which means we will get out of balance from time, and the best thing we can do is to learn to recognize those times and move ourselves as best we can back into balance.

In life when we set ourselves a goal, the object we are aiming for is invisible, except in our head, in our imagination. Yet we must begin somewhere, in some direction, with some action if we are to attain that goal. When I took mortar sighting in an Army ROTC class in college, I learned that the goal or target of the mortar was invisible to me. I had to rely on a forward observer to tell me where the mortar landed *after* I shot the round off. I was taught to overshoot on the first lob of a mortar, then undershoot on the next and bracket in on the target from there using at every lob the feedback from my forward observer who could see the target and tell me where the previous round landed. Our imagination is our forward observer and can tell us at each point how close our efforts are to achieving our goal. Mortar sighting is an example of using dynamic balancing to achieve an invisible objective in the shortest possible time.

What is the nature of your objective? Is it something based on outer facts or something based on inner truths? Something which involves the natural world or something which involves mystical realities? Or is your goal one of achieving balance? Think of this poem Steiner has us imagine under a sundial.

**I am a shadow.
So too art thou!
I reckon with time.
And thou?**

[page 103] Just think, such profound words under a sundial, "I am a shadow. So too art thou!" A

shadow cast by the sun. "I reckon with time. And thou?" Here, out of direct perception of a concrete reality, speaks the profound truth that human life is but a shadow of what works and weaves in the spiritual world. How vividly this comes to meet the weary wanderer, imprinting itself in his heart, when he steps before the sundial and sees the shadow! The sundial then points out to him: "A shadow so too art thou! I reckon with time. And thou?" Just imagine, these are profound and powerful questions for us, for our conscience: "Do you reckon with time? Are you finding your place in your time?" That is what I mean by saying balance must be sought.

What is Steiner's view of balance? Here it is in a nutshell:

[page 104] Mysticism is one-sided and luciferic; natural science is one-sided and ahrimanic. But mysticism developed through observation of external nature or observation of nature deepened to mysticism, that is balance!

And, he gives us another poem, this time also set in a natural setting amidst the sublime beauty of the Alps. This time a hiker who has been admiring the breath-taking scenery comes upon a crucifix with an statue of Christ on it and these words affixed to it:

**Stay your steps, wanderer,
Look on my wounds.
Wounds abide,
Hours glide.
Take heed, and guard thy way,
Be aware what on the judgment day
O'er thee as verdict I shall say.**

[page 106] These are simple words, sublime words — grandest poetry! To be made aware of the greatest event in the evolution of the earth while surrounded by sublime nature and its graceful beauty means to experience with the soul the reality in the universe. . . . We can perceive the spiritual world only when our striving is neither only one-sided mysticism, nor only one-sided observation of nature, but instead is directed toward the union of both.

Steiner has placed before us an example of the balance he suggests we seek in the world. Not a one-sided goal of climbing to the top of every high mountain as some hiker proclaimed in the local newspaper the other day. Not a desire to become a mystic recluse in some Hindu ashram. But a balance between observing nature in its grandeur and finding the spiritual as it is revealed in the events of the world. When people begin to toss aside their one-sided seeking, he says, there will be "much less versifying and much less defining."

[page 106] For definitions only lead people to overestimate words, and versifying leads them to misuse words.

Ah, yes. When people overestimate words, they toss them carelessly at one another as though the words are the gifts instead of the wings upon which meaning flies from soul to soul. They have mistaken the form for the content; they have wrapped an empty present and sent it to a friend. Recently a friend of mine mailed me a couple of pearl covered shirt studs I had loaned him for a Mardi Gras ball. He put them in one envelope inside another envelope. When my mail arrived, I noticed that some careful and attentive person at the post office had taped shut the double envelope when it broke open during its passage through the sorting and canceling machine. I opened the package to find it empty. The postal worker had sealed shut an empty package! Imagine how I felt. That feeling is what people feel when someone sends verses which are merely mimicking poems that others have written — no matter how pretty the package or how thoughtfully sealed.

To replicate verses is adorable in pre-teens who pen variations of "Rose are red, violets are blue", but between adults, the effect of such replication is similar to excitedly opening a beautiful package only to find it empty. When cells of the body begin such replication without meaning, we call it cancerous. Cancerous cells are constructive cells, but they merely replicate without any meaning or goal. This process of mistaking replication for growth is rampant in our

society. One hears about the cancerous growth of shopping centers and parking lots — all stamped out like from a cookie cutter — with no further thought for the life of an area than "more is better" — which would be the same motto for any cancerous growth.

[page 107] Alas, people in our age have become inured to true poetry because there is much too much verse around, and poetry begets more poetry just as unhealthy living produces cancer. Encouraging everybody to write poems based on what already exists in poetry is the same on the cultural and spiritual level as stimulating the life process to produce cancerous growth.

To close this lecture Steiner explains why Orientals do not understand the Mystery of Golgotha: it is because they do not see one event as more important than another. To understand this great event in human evolution, one must be able comprehend the events leading up to it and those events proceeding after it, which we are living at this moment, some 2,000 years hence.

[page 115] That the earth is based entirely on the fact that we have a time of preparation for the Mystery of Golgotha followed by the Mystery of Golgotha itself as the zenith of earth evolution, and then the living into it, this truth is what humanity will gradually have to understand, based on the symptomatic view of history, of course.

Any one-sided view or approach to life, whether it is ahrimanic materialism or luciferic spiritualism, will eventually grow repetitious with all the problems that entails. To hold onto one's views or approach to life "because I've always done it this way" is mawkish and sentimental — a huge waste of one's time as a shadow of what works and weaves in the world around one.

[page 115] Everything spiritual science can give us will ultimately culminate in the Christian view of the world, which will prevail. As I have often said, spiritual science does not want to be a new kind of religion. Rather it wants to provide the tools for humanity, which would otherwise completely fall prey to materialism, to fully understand again the spiritual that is contained in Christianity. It is absolutely necessary to look with open eyes at our age, and that is much more important than any sentimental looking into it.

During the lecture "The Feeling for Truth," poems by Rudolf Steiner and Robert Hammerling were recited by Frau Steiner followed by music. One of the poems was a satire by Rudolf Steiner called "The Song of Initiation." Steiner had these prefatory remarks about the poems to be recited.

[page 117] What is nowadays called poetry will gradually take on a new face. Granted, this is hard to understand these days, but it is true nevertheless. Though nowadays people hardly feel this way, poetry should represent what human beings experience together with the cosmos, what is drawn from the mysteries of the cosmos. All this must flow into poetic form. . . . And today [shortly] you will hear attempts at poetry where the laws that reign in the cosmos also prevail in the sequence of the lines, their relationship to each other, and in their meaning. For instance, you will hear a poem of twelve stanzas, and each stanza has seven lines. The structure of the poem is such that what the seven lines express represents the laws of the movements of the seven planets. The fact that there are exactly twelve stanzas and that the mood of the seven lines is repeated in each stanza corresponds to the laws determining the planets' orbits through the signs of the zodiac. Thus, what is going on outside in the cosmos, in the harmony of the spheres, is also in the meaning of the twelve stanzas of seven lines each. The laws of the cosmos are meant to prevail in these twelve verses of seven lines.

The structure of his landmark book [The Philosophy of Freedom](#) was two sets of seven chapters with twelve topics covered during each chapter corresponding to the signs of the zodiac. This structure was outlined by Steiner in his lectures given a dozen or so years later in a book published as [Human and Cosmic Thought](#). There were two poems recited during this lecture that consisted of twelve quatrains, one of them was intended to be taken seriously, the other was intended to provoke laughter. So far as I know there are no photos extant of Rudolf Steiner laughing, but his sense of humor shows through even in his serious writings at times. Here he exhorts us to laugh when appropriate, i.e., not

to be serious-faced all the time.

[page 118] Now you may easily think it improper to treat "sacred things" satirically. But truly, my dear friends, if we want to advance in this sphere of a spiritual world view, one of the basic requirements is precisely that we do not forget to laugh at those things in the world that are a laughing matter when judged rightly.

As an example of a too serious person, Steiner told a story about a man with a long face. In this snippet we can catch a view of the demeanor of someone whose is skewed towards luciferic longing and hope.

[page 118] A lady once told a story about a man who was always in a mood of "looking up to the great cosmic revelations." He never spoke of other people at all, only of "masters," and she also said he usually made a long face.

This next passage from Steiner is to be read quickly and forgotten just as quickly. Like you might read a newspaper, not as you might study an important text. As a daily newspaper reader myself, I appreciated his remarks about the nature of newspaper reading. I scan the entire paper, but choose carefully what articles I read to get a flavor of the good news that exists in my world. Newspapers can provide me at a glance answers to questions that the news channels on TV from the night before went over repetitiously but never provided me simple answers while I was watching. With the newspaper I get all the news laid out, so I can select those items I want answers to instantly.

In my 1975 graduate course in Marketing at WPI, I came across a concept known as the "source effect" which can be defined as "the differential impact the advertising exposure will have on the same audience member if the exposure occurs in one media rather than another." What has been discovered is that people will remember longer and better some piece of information from a source whose name they have forgotten than from one they remember. It seems that information we gather from the periphery of our consciousness goes deeper and lasts longer than information which we consciously focus on.

What is amazing is that Steiner knew about this effect some 60 years earlier and spoke about it during this lecture.

[page 126, 127] Now, in our time most people who read anything read the newspapers. Newspapers don't last beyond their day, and people think the newspapers leave their soul as easily as they entered it. They imagine this compensates for the superficiality and dishonesty of our journalism, which really defy description. But things are not the way people usually believe them to be. The contents of a book does not imprint itself as deeply into the soul of most people these days, though they remember it much longer, as the contents of the short-lived newspaper. It is precisely this fleeting and transitory character of the newspaper and the fact that we do not try to remember it but want to forget it quickly — forgetting here must be quick — that allows it to imprint itself infinitely deeply into our unconscious.

One can wonder if the material on television, invented since Steiner's day, also imprints itself deeply in our unconscious. No doubt one must be as careful when choosing television programs as in choosing articles in the newspaper. Does this mean we should avoid television and newspapers? No. We chose to come here to Earth at a time when television and newspapers are available and thus comprise part of the karmic feast we set for ourselves. What we must do is choose and balance our sources of information.

[page 127] It is important to know that what we take in so quickly and then quickly forget is actually imprinted deeply into the subconscious of our soul and works there as a force over time. It goes on working in what we can call the general spirit of the times, the ahrimanic spirit of the times. In other words, good books today have far less effect than newspaper articles. What is carefully taken in and works upon the ego, which imprints it into our memory, has much less effect than what we take in hastily from a newspaper. Please do not take this to mean that you should not read newspapers, but accept it as your karma. Obviously, I don't mean that we must avoid reading so much as a line in a newspaper. We must take newspapers as part of the karma of our age and develop the side of our being that is able to sense whether we are reading actual content, something

containing true spiritual striving, or mere empty words.

Here is a quick quote from Steiner about how many Christians today know less about Jesus than do Turks who read the Koran. Forget you read it here.

[page 131] Remember, I once read you a short passage from the Koran to show that Turks who know their Koran believe much more about Jesus than many modern pastors do.

One example of this lack of understanding the Bible is found in those clever people who point out the discrepancies between the various Gospels. They even claim the four Gospels contradict each other, and that only fools would believe such drivel. Steiner said in other lectures, "Discussion begins where knowledge ends." Such discussions about the conflicts in the Gospel stories only began in earnest during the nineteenth century when direct knowledge of the truths of the Gospels were lost to humankind.

[page 133] Just think of one of the symptoms of this development: in earlier centuries, people were also reading the four Gospels and found the force contained in them. Thus, they approached an emotional and psychological understanding of the Mystery of Golgotha. Then came the people of the nineteenth century who were naturally more clever than their ancestors and discovered that the four Gospels contradict each other! How could their intellect avoid seeing that the Gospels contradicted each other? Great pains were taken to find all the contradictions and to unearth a core common to all Gospels. Not much came of all this, but the attempt made many people famous in the course of the nineteenth and even in the twentieth century. Well, are people of earlier centuries supposed to not have seen that the Gospels contradict each other? Were they really so foolish that they didn't see that the Gospel of Matthew differs from the Gospel of John? Or, perhaps, has it just not occurred to nineteenth century people that their ancestors had a different sort of understanding, sought understanding with a quite different organ of their soul? You can answer that question for yourselves on the basis of what you have learned of spiritual science.

It will be essential for people to study spiritual science if they are to be able fully to comprehend the Mystery of Golgotha or understand Christianity from now on. It is the only way that one can get grounded in the reality of the cosmos in which we live and to know Christ's place in our cosmos. Unfortunately the people who need this grounding are often the ones who are least aware that they need it.

[page 134] People can easily delude themselves into believing that what they think is right. The less people are grounded in reality, the more they are usually convinced their opinion is right. Those who know the least about Christianity are often the very same ones who believe they know the most about it. In other words, it does not matter what we fool ourselves into thinking true; what matters is that we judge on the basis of reality.

One place where scientists do not judge on the basis of reality is in atomic and sub-atomic physics. Steiner mentioned that our atomistic nervous system is the reason for our penchant to think in terms of globules like atoms and the various particles which are said to comprise the atom. In his comment below that "in a house of cards, we at least have cards" we glimpse a flash of his sense of humor again.

[page 136, 137] As I told you, nobody has ever seen these molecules and atoms; they are hypothetical — in a certain sense the hypothesis of their existence is justified, as long as we keep in mind that it is only a hypothesis. In short, we are to some extent justified in thinking that the cosmic building consists of parts or members, and there is nothing wrong with trying to get a clear picture of these. However, the people who give rein to their fantasy in thinking about the atom and who perhaps even talk about the life of the atom, or have still wilder notions about it — well, they are simply speaking about the nothing of a nothing, for the atom itself is merely hypothetical. To build a hypothesis upon other hypotheses is nothing else but building a house of cards; not even that, for in a house of cards we have at least the cards, but in speculations about the atom, we have nothing.

Steiner explains the emptiness of the scientific explanations of atoms by an elaborate metaphor. Imagine an artwork

which consists of a carefully arranged set of rolls, like window shades all rolled up. On each window shade is a beautiful picture, but all we can see while it is rolled up is the white outside border of the picture, so we have no clue as to the presence of the pictures that are stored inside each of the many rolls. Now imagine that scientists, when they examine atomic structure, simply observe the outside of the rolls. As they probe deeper, they find more structure, but again they are only observing the outside of the rolls. Their explanations about what the atoms contain would fall far short of reality, would they not?

And further suppose that these are not frozen images, but live images, living forces that built up the Earth during the Saturn, Sun, and Moon stages of evolution, all stored inside these living images.

[page 140] When you think this analogy through, you will find that when we first look at this structure, we cannot know anything about the paintings inside the rolls. If the structure is rather artful and ingenious, we can get an artful and ingenious description of it; however, it will not contain a word about the paintings inside the rolls.

You see, that's how it is with the conventional sciences. They describe this artistic structure, while ignoring completely the paintings on the inside of each roll. Now, you may wonder if a description of the elaborate structure of the rolls allows us to get an idea and to really know what is inside each roll as long as the rolls are rolled up and part of the whole structure? No, it does not! Conventional science is completely unable to arrive at the idea that the spiritual underlies our cosmic edifice. Therefore, simply continuing along the lines of conventional science will not lead to an understanding of spiritual science; something else must be added, something that has nothing to do with ordinary science.

Material science is, in effect, unable to read the writing of the cosmos — it is only able to describe the shapes of the words of the writing. One cannot learn to read from scratch by examining the shapes of the letters on the page. When the Gospel of John says, "In the beginning was the Word," it is this kind of word that is meant. A cosmic Word whose stroke of each letter contains one of those living rolled up images. John was taught during his initiation to read this Word and his Gospel contains his translation into written language so that he might share it with us.

[page 142] Initiation was not based on teaching souls to describe what was outside them, but on teaching them to read it, to decipher, so to speak, the meaning of the world. Thus, it was with good reason that what is spiritual in the world was called "the Word," for the world has to be read if it is to be understood spiritually. And we do not learn to read by memorizing the shape of the letters but by receiving spiritual impulses.

The two major political parties in the USA are the luciferic Democrats and the ahrimanic Republicans. This is a broad generalization for which many exceptions might be found, but what interests me is how far back in history the distinctions between the two parties go. Steiner notes how this sorting into luciferic and ahrimanic political factions goes back to James I, the King of England, and Francisco Suarez, the Jesuit Philosopher.

[page 157, 158] At the time of James I, a very ahrimanic new development was inaugurated. Another development began with Suarez that was very luciferic. Their combined influence, and particularly their fights against each other, shaped much of what lives and weaves in the present age.

Here we come to mysterious connections. I don't want to blame anyone with what I am going to say now. For example, we find that a great deal of what these days is called historical materialism or Marxism, the Social Democratic outlook, can be traced directly to Suarez. Now please do not take this to mean that I am saying the Social Democrats are Jesuits. Nevertheless, there are in a certain sense good reasons for connecting the Social Democrats with the Jesuits. By the same token, many members of the opposing party, that is, those who oppose social democracy, can be traced back directly to what was inaugurated by James I.

There are certain factions today who criticize the Waldorf Schools founded by Steiner, calling anthroposophy a religion that is taught by the schools, and talking all kinds of nonsense about Steiner's work in general. This is easy to

do for those who know very little about spiritual science. Steiner cautioned his audience of anthroposophists on many occasions that they were not to become a sect.

[page 160] . . . we have to understand that our movement really must not become a sect and must not even have any characteristics of a sectarian movement if it is to fulfill its task. We can accomplish much if we take the general culture into account. People outside our movement for the most part write nonsense about it — if they write about it at all. You may say this does not matter in a deeper sense. On the contrary, it matters very much! That is why we have to defend ourselves and do what we can to stop it. We have to do everything possible so that eventually people will not write nonsense but something better.

"People who are united in spirit are always together." (Page 169) This saying of Steiner's speaks powerfully to us today. We do best to take it to heart if we have lost loved ones who are no longer living but spiriting. Our love unites us to them in spirit and thus we are always with them. We respect them by speaking directly to them as they are always united in spirit with us and hear us.

[page 169] People who are united in spirit are always together. Neither space nor time can separate them, and particularly not a more or less short span of time. Let us remain united in thoughts that try again to penetrate a little bit what I have said here in these days to your souls.

We must take in the full weight of the significance of the truths connected with the Mystery of Golgotha. Let us realize that in order to understand this or that we have to be in the solitude of our souls and return there again and again. But let us also understand that we belong to humanity and that the One Who went through the Mystery of Golgotha brought something from spiritual heights to the earth for all human beings, for the working together of all people. And let us remember that He said: "When two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in their midst."

Here we are, we two, gathered together, me writing these words and you reading them. And He is in our midst. With His help "let us have the courage to admit that things are as they are and must be dealt with accordingly." We are humans, after all, and we will get out of kilter from time to time, sliding in a luciferic or ahrimanic direction, but He is ever ready to help us restore our balance, if we but ask. By studying spiritual science we are learning to speak His language and helping others to do the same.



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

Footnote 1. This footnote referred to Steiner's lectures titled [The Gospel of St. Luke](#), Ten Lectures in Basle in 1909.

[Return to text directly before Footnote 1.](#)

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**Footnote 2.** [The Riddle of Humanity](#) and [Cosmosophy, Volume 2](#). See also this excellent essay by Joseph Graf, [Encountering Nature with the twelve senses](#).

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Footnote 3. Definition: spirit — an intransitive verb meaning to exist in the time between death and a new birth.

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**Footnote 4.** Bible, 1 Kings, Ch. 7 and 2 Chronicles, Ch. 3. The Kings citation gives these terse literal translations as follows (KJV): Jachin -- He shall establish, and Boaz — in It is Strength. Chronicles is almost identical with "It" replaced by "Him".

[Return to text directly before Footnote 4.](#)

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