

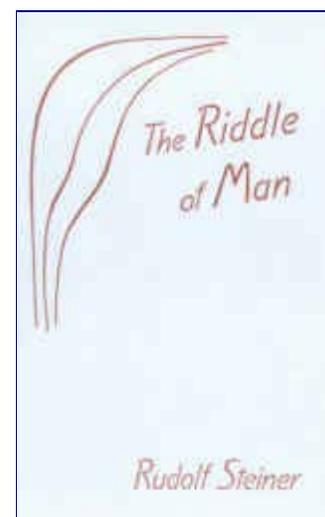
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A READER'S JOURNAL

The Riddle of Man — What They Left Unsaid
A Book
by
Rudolf Steiner

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A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2005



As the subtitle says, this book takes us into the writings and thoughts of a series of writers, particularly the Austrian author, Rudolf Steiner. In the last chapter called "New Perspectives" Steiner gives us the theme of this book:

[page 125] The purpose of this book is to indicate germinal points in the world views of a series of thinkers from Fichte to Hamerling. The contemplation of these germinal points evokes a feeling that these thinkers drew from a source of spiritual experience from which much more can flow than they brought forth. What matters is not so much one's acceptance or rejection of what they expressed, but rather one's understanding of the *character* of their striving for knowledge and the *direction* of their path. One can then arrive at the view that there is something in this character and direction that is more promise than fulfillment. And yet it is a promise with innate power, bearing the guarantee of its fulfillment within itself.

Through this one gains a relationship to these thinkers that is not one of adherence to the dogmas of their world views, but rather one leading to the insight that: Upon the paths they took, there lie living powers for seeking knowledge that did not take effect in what they themselves recognized but that can lead out of and beyond it.

Steiner gives quotes as samples of what these writers said, but more importantly he points to what they "left unsaid" — quite a remarkable achievement, and one rarely achieved by writers of the nascent twenty-first century. Today's writers seem intent on dealing with the world of reality and shying away from the world of spirit. Their presupposition is that the world of spirit is *not* the world of reality, and that presupposition will create for them a world which turns out exactly the way they supposed it to be. EAT-O-TWIST. But the German and Austrian writers, such as the poet Robert Hamerling, were different from the thinkers and writers of today.

[page 124] One can also see in Hamerling how a person striving toward existence's ideas has a healthier sense for practical life than a person who, fearful of the spirit, shies away from the world of ideas and feels himself thereby to be a true "man of reality. "

This book cannot be read as simply as a critique of German and Austrian writers. It must be taken as an intimate portrait of their thought-streams by Rudolf Steiner who knew many of them personally and

wanted to ensure that their quest for the spiritual world would be immortalized within the covers of this book. Each word of this book should be read as if it were written in Steiner's own blood. William Lindeman's words in the Translator's Introduction tells us how urgent and important Steiner considered the task he set for himself in this book:

[page 1] He wrote this book during World War I, with his "heart's blood," sometimes devoting two days to writing one sentence. Time would tell, he said, whether it would also be as "badly read" as his previous books. An unusually personal quality imbues this book, as though Rudolf Steiner could not keep the deepest concerns of his heart from showing through.

There is no "Reality for Dummies" book. But that doesn't keep people from wanting books about the deep secrets of reality written in simple form, easy-to-understand, like "Windows for Dummies" or "Canadian History for Dummies", to name a few actual titles of recent Dummies' books. This quote from Johann Gottlieb Fichte indicates this tendency of people even back in Steiner's time to avoid reading anything which had not been dumbed-down for them:

[page 11] But when they themselves now demand that everything to which they cannot lift themselves be brought down to their level, when they demand, for example, that all printed matter should be like cookbooks, arithmetic books, or service regulations, and when they decry everything that cannot be used in this way, then they themselves are in error in a major way.

Reading Steiner is heavy lifting. And there is no way to make it lighter, no "Steiner for Dummies" book. It is not the content of Steiner books which make them difficult — it is the changes in modes of thought in the reader which they require for comprehension. Until new readers of Steiner's books and lectures have developed their muscles by actually reading and attempting to comprehend his words, the words will not create meaning in them. These muscles are required to lift oneself to the level at which Steiner is thinking and writing.

This book is titled, "The Riddle of Man." One of the riddles is this: "How is it possible for two people to look at the same reality, and come to two completely different opinions on it?" If two people cannot agree, how can billions of people ever agree? Steiner tackles this riddle in his "Foreword and Introduction" to this book.

[page 9] When one notices that two thinkers express different thoughts about the questions of life, one all too readily has the feeling: If both were bringing true reality to expression in their thoughts, they would have to say the same thing, not something different. And one thinks that the difference cannot have its basis in reality but must lie only in the personal (subjective) way thinkers grasp things. Even though this is not always openly acknowledged by those who speak about world views, this opinion does underlie — more or less consciously, or even unconsciously — the spirit and style of their words. In fact, the thinkers themselves for the most part live in just such a preconception. They express their thoughts on what they consider reality to be, regard these thoughts as their "system" and rightful world view, and believe that any other direction in thought is based on the personal peculiarities of the thinker.

"You are wrong, and I am right. We cannot both be right." This is the usual form in which personal disagreements take. We each see a photo of a tree. One is taken from the east side of the tree, and one is taken from the north side. We cannot agree it is the same tree. Two or more views of the same tree need not prevent us, but rather can help bring the true reality of the tree into expression, Steiner admonishes us. But instead thinkers find themselves in exquisite confusion, leading them to agree with Kant that the essential things of life are unknowable.

[page 10] The confusion in ideas arises when people do not understand this, when they

make themselves-or are made by other people-into materialists, idealists, monists, dualists, spiritualists, mystics, or even into Theosophists, and when they mean to express by this that one arrives at a true view about life's sources only if one's whole way of thinking is in tune with one of these concepts. But it is reality itself that one wants to know from one side through materialistic ideas, from another side through spiritual ideas, from a third side as a unity (*monon*), from a fourth as a duality. The thinking person would like to encompass the essential being of reality through *one* way of picturing things. And when he notices that he undertakes this in vain, he gets around this fact by saying: All our mental pictures about the roots of real life have a personal (subjective) form, and the essential being of the "thing-in-itself" remains unknowable.

When we are led to such a belief, as so many continue to be today, the results are not savory. Such a belief lies at the very root of the rampant secular humanism in society today, with its legions of atheists, agnostics, freethinkers, rationalists, and skeptics, etc. Steiner minces no words about the results of such a belief:

[page 11] It is actually a disaster when the ideas, fruitful for life, of the individual world views are kept at a distance from this life by the belief that their differences prove them all to be subjectively colored by the thinkers' ways of picturing things.

Steiner strives in this book to show how truth "lives in the ideas of individual thinkers, in spite of their differences." This book indeed requires some heavy lifting because one has to learn to see this tree of truth from many perspectives, some which may not be familiar. One will likely find one's personal world view challenged by taking on a different world view, and discover not a contradiction, but rather an enlarged view of the world in the process. In addition one can learn how one's people can help one "develop a certain way of picturing the truth common to all mankind." Steiner does this with the people he knows best, the German-speaking people of Austria and Germany where he lived out his lifetime.

[page 13] His people do not want to judge his knowledge; but it can be a faithfully supportive *adviser* on the way to truth. Indications about the extent to which this can be sensed with respect to the German people are meant to be given in this book by portraying a series of personalities who have arisen out of this people. The author of this book hopes that one will recognize his sense that a loving, thoughtful penetration into the particular soul nature of one people does not necessarily lead to a non-recognition and disregard for the being and worth of other peoples. At another time it would be unnecessary to state this specifically. It is necessary today in view of the feelings that are expressed from many sides about what is German.

Idealism as an Awakening of the Soul: Johann Gottlieb Fichte

One looks out upon the world and sees there what one holds inside of oneself. Our world view is a projection of our self out upon the world. We each live in the same world, but our views of the world are as varied as we are inside of our self. Fichte said it this way:

[page 17]Fichte once expressed his conviction that the kind of world view one has depends upon the kind of person one is.

The kind of person one is — this is another way of talking about one's soul experiences, which Fichte strived all his life to find ways to express. Steiner uses the metaphor of a drop of water in the ocean to illustrate that what can be known in one's soul is what pervades everything around one. In a drop of ocean water can be found molecules washed from the shores of every continent likewise with what washes in and out of one's soul.

[page 18] Within man's own soul Fichte wishes to find a living element in which the human being grasps not only the basic force of his own existence, but in which there can

also be known — in its essential being — what weaves and works in nature and in everything else outside him. In a drop of water, relative to the ocean, one has only a tiny sphere. But if one knows this little sphere in its character as water, then in this knowledge one also knows the whole ocean in its character as water. If something can be discovered in the being of man that can be experienced as a revelation of the innermost weaving of the world, then one may hope, through deepened self-knowledge, to advance to world knowledge.

Rene Descartes is best known for writing *cogito ergo sum* — I think, therefore I am — and I have undoubtedly found few treatments of the meaning of this phrase as succinct and insightful as Steiner's here:

[page 20] It is within the soul itself that Descartes finds the point upon which he can base conviction: The mental pictures I form for myself of the world's course are no dream; they live a life that is a part in the life of the whole world. Even though I can doubt everything, there is *one* thing I cannot doubt, for to express doubt in *it* would belie my own words. For is it not certain that when I give myself over to doubt *I am thinking*? I could not doubt if I did not think. Therefore I cannot possibly doubt my own experience in thinking. If I wanted, through doubt, to kill thinking: it would just rise up living again out of the doubt. My thinking lives, therefore; it does not stand in some dream world; it stands in the *world of being (Sein)*. If I could believe that everything else, even my own body, gave me only the illusion of *being*, still my thinking does not deceive me. Just as true as it is that I think, it is true that I am, insofar as I think. It was from sentiments such as these that Descartes' "I think, therefore I am" (*Cogito ergo sum*) rang out into the world. And whoever has an ear for such things will also hear the power of this statement resounding in all subsequent thinkers until Kant.

Only with Fichte, Steiner tells us, did these reverberations cease. For him *cogito ergo sum* was not a foundation upon which Fichte felt secure.

[page 21] . . . one has the feeling that Descartes' statement, "I think, therefore I am" could not be the rock upon which Fichte, in his struggles, could believe himself secure against the waves of doubt that can turn man's mental pictures into an ocean of dreams.

For Fichte understood his thoughts as dreams, and thus could not base his being on the process of thinking. In his words we find reflected the story of the man who dreamed he was a butterfly and wondered, "Am I a man dreaming I'm a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming I am a man?"

[page 22] Why should I say, "I think, therefore I am" since, after all, if I am living in an ocean of dreams, my thinking can be nothing more than "a dream about a dream"? For Fichte, what penetrates and gives reality to my thoughts about the world must come from a completely different source than *mere* thinking about the world.

Steiner offers of the story of Columbus' egg to illustrate how simple it can be to crush Descartes' dictum. How did Columbus stand the egg on end when no one else could? He crushed one end of the egg.

[page 23] The fable of the egg of Columbus is true forever. And it is also true that the statement "I think, therefore I am" simply shatters upon the fact of human sleep. Every sleep, which interrupts thinking, shows — not, indeed, that there is no being in thinking — but that in any case "I am, even when I am not thinking." Therefore, if only thinking is the source for *being*, then nothing could guarantee the *being* of soul states in which thinking has ceased. Although Fichte did not express this train of thought in this form, one can still definitely say: The power lying within these simple facts worked — unconsciously — in his soul and kept him from taking a path like that taken by Descartes.

Two images of Johann Gottlieb Fichte's youth reveal the special quality of soul he possessed. It can be said that Henry David Thoreau saw "sermons in stone, books in running brooks, and good in everything." (From Shakespeare's "As You Like It") Fichte actually threw his favorite book into a running brook. How can one explain that? Rather, what does that reveal about the character of his soul?

[page 23] Johann Gottlieb is seven years old. Until this time he was a good student. In order to reward the boy's industriousness, his father gives him a book of legends, *The Horned Siegfried*. The boy is completely taken with this book. He neglects his duties somewhat. He becomes aware of this about himself. One day his father sees him throwing *The Horned Siegfried* into the brook. The boy is attached to the book with his whole heart; but how can the heart be allowed to keep something that diverts one from one's *duty*? Thus the feeling is already living *unconsciously* in the young Fichte that the human being is in the world as an expression of a higher order, which descends into his soul not through his interest in one thing or another, but through the path by which he acknowledges *duty*. Here one can see the impulse behind Fichte's stance toward certainty about reality. Perceptual experiences are not what is certain for man, but rather what rises up livingly in the soul in the same way that duty reveals itself.

Have you ever heard someone read a biblical text aloud and it sounded like an eighth-grader reading from an book in class? The reading is polite and well-paced, but you know immediately that the words are *not* living in the soul of the person reading them. Fichte had the ability to light up the spirit of the outer world in his soul, as this next story reveals.

[page 24] The boy is nine years old. A landowner near his father's village comes into town one Sunday to hear the minister's sermon. He arrives too late. The sermon is over. People remember that nine-year-old Johann Gottlieb retains sermons in his soul so well that he can completely reproduce them. They fetch him. The boy, in his little farmer's smock, appears. He is awkward at first; but then presents the sermon in such a way that one can see that what lived in the sermon had utterly filled his soul; he does not merely repeat words; he speaks out of the spirit of the sermon that lives within him entirely as his own experience.

The next story is from Fichte's subsequent life as a professor and he sounds like a Zen master in a Dojo teaching his students. Again one does best to ask oneself what does this reveal about the qualities of soul that Fichte possessed.

[page 24, 25] In the course of his lecture Fichte calls upon his listeners: "Think about the wall," His listeners made every effort to think about the wall. After they had done this for a while, Fichte's next demand follows: "And now think about the one who thought about the wall," What striving for a direct and living relationship between one's own soul life and that of one's listeners! What pointing toward an inner soul activity to be undertaken immediately — not merely to stimulate reflection on verbal communications, but rather to awaken a life element slumbering in the souls of his listeners so that these souls will attain a state that changes their previous relationship to the course of the world.

With this next passage, Steiner summarizes the world-view of Fichte which sprang from "the character of the German people."

[page 28] To him a world view seemed un-German that did not "*believe* in spirituality and in the freedom of this spirituality," and that did not "*want* the eternal further development of this spirituality and freedom." In his view, "Whoever believes in a standstill, a regression, or a circle dance, or even sets a dead nature at the helm of world

rulership" goes not only against any more deeply penetrating knowledge, but also against the essential nature of what is truly German.

Idealism as a View About Nature and the Spirit: Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling

Steiner contrasts Schelling and Fichte in this fashion:

[page 29] For Fichte, the all-encompassing world-will shines into the awakening soul as a spiritual realm of light; and he wants to know the rays of this light in their essential being. For Schelling, the world riddle consists in the fact that he sees himself, with his soul awakened to egohood, confronted by a seemingly mute and lifeless nature.

In the fairy tale of "Sleeping Beauty", the Prince is presented a mute and lifeless form of the sleeping Princess, but does he simply go away and report his finding as a scientist of our day might do about Nature? No, he takes action and kisses the Princess and she springs to life. In a sense this is what Schelling does: he kisses Nature and she becomes free from the spell of appearance, the illusion of lifelessness. If Nature appears mute, the soul must become the voice of Nature.

[page 29] But nature remains mute if the soul does not make itself into the instrument of nature's speech; nature seems dead if the spirit of man does not free life from the spell of semblance (*Schein*). The secrets of nature must sound forth from the depths of the human soul. But in order for this not to be a deception, it must be the essential being of nature itself that speaks out of the human soul.

Unless we each, individually, fashion our soul into an instrument of nature's speech, we will perceive only the outer garments of nature, and not what weaves within nature as soul and spirit. Scientists who do not achieve this instrument within themselves cannot reveal what weaves within nature as soul and spirit, but are limited to simply describing the outer garments of nature in one of the many -ologies they create. Steiner does not decry such -ologies, but simply points to the self-imposed limitations under which they operate, up until now.

[page 31] One can belong unreservedly to those who want to promote natural science to the full as demanded by our modern "natural-scientific age"; and one can nevertheless understand the justification for Schelling's attempt to create, above and beyond this natural science, a view of nature that enters an area that this natural science will not want to touch at all if it rightly understands itself. But the belief is unjustified which asserts that, *besides* the natural science created by our ordinary cognitive powers, there can exist no view of nature that is attained by means different from those particular to this natural science as such.

All the thinking which goes into these -ologies of the hard sciences, as they like to call themselves, presupposes that the *only* path to real knowledge is "thinking comprehension." Schelling, in his *Treatise on the Essential Being of Man's Freedom* forthrightly disagrees with that presupposition. In effect he avers:

[page 35, 36] Out of the depths of the world, something bursts into the circumference of what thinking comprehension is; this something is more far-reaching and powerful than thinking comprehension, but not more powerful actually than what the soul can experience within itself when thinking comprehension appears to the soul only as a part of the soul's own essential being.

Schelling was much in harmony with Jakob Böhme in his understanding of freedom as a spiritual activity.

[page 36] Jakob Böhme's thoroughly healthy way of knowledge — his original deeper heart's knowledge, so in accordance with the feeling of the people — beheld freedom as weaving and working through everything necessitated, working even through natural

necessity.

When one participates in freedom as a spiritual activity, what results cannot be predicted ahead of time by some logical deduction from the previous state of the world. It amazes me to find scientists in my own field of physics ignoring the insights of innovators in physics as the result of spiritual activity and accepting the presentation of their college textbooks which present the insights as if they were created by a logical deduction from the previous state of physics knowledge. They are rightly deluded who accept such puerile explanations of the source of innovation.

[page 36, 37] Whoever believes that in history only ideas that follow necessarily from each other are revealed, does not understand the course of the world. For with freedom supersensible being reaches into this course from stage to stage; and what freedom accomplishes at each new stage can only be *beheld* as a fact revealed to the deeper heart (*Germüt*); it cannot be thought up beforehand, by logical deduction from the evolution of ideas until then, as a *necessitated* next stage.

No, the ideas are received into the human soul as if from an FM receiver which must be tuned to the very idea one wishes to receive. One must have the seed of the idea and hold it constant long enough for the completion of the idea to enter one's thoughts and fructify them in a way than cannot be predicted beforehand. We must want like Schelling "to ascend to a comprehension of what the world ideas holding sway in everything does not have within itself but can *take up* into itself" (Page 37) — take up into itself as a radio takes up an FM broadcast.

[page 37] The ideas that want to know the world do not need to bow out just because *mere* thinking comprehension is inadequate for knowledge of life. One need not say: Because ideas, with what at first lies within their own being, do not penetrate into the depths of the world, therefore the depths of the world cannot be known. No, when ideas give themselves over to these depths and become permeated by what ideas do not have in themselves, then these ideas rise up from the ground of the world, newborn and wafted through by the essential being of the "spirit of the world."

Doyles are physical body states or bodily facts stored during original events between conception and five years old. When later in life a seed of a stored doyle occurs, some portion or component of the doyle itself is activated, that seed acts as a trigger to cause the entire doyle to become active or arise up from the depths of the human body. What I hear Schelling and Steiner saying is that ideas are spiritual facts stored in the cosmos when seed of the idea is activated in the human soul, the full idea will eventually arise.

The following poem arose in response to the thoughts provoked in me by the material on these pages:

The Big Idea

Ideas may be triggered from the macrocosm
of the spiritual world
Like doyles triggered from microcosm
of the bodily world.

Bring together components of a doyle
stored in your body from the beginning
of the microcosm of your body from conception
to five years old
And the doyle will arise in your body.

Bring together components of an idea
stored in the spiritual world from the beginning
of the macrocosm of our world until now

And the idea will arise in your spirit.

Idealism as the Beholding of Thoughts: Hegel

In neither Fichte nor Schelling could the *cogito ergo sum* seed of Descartes find much nutrition for its growth. But in the German Idealism of Hegel the seed began to flourish as a "wide-branching tree."

[page 39] For, what this thinker created as a world view is a comprehensive thought-painting or, so to speak, a many-membered thought-body, consisting of numerous single thoughts that mutually carry, support, move, enliven, and illuminate one another. What is meant here by thoughts does not stem from the sense impressions of the outer world, nor even from the everyday experiences of human feeling life (*Gemüt*); what is meant is thoughts that reveal themselves in the soul when the soul lifts itself out of its sense impressions and out of the experiences of its feeling life and makes itself into an onlooker of the process by which a thought, free of everything of a non-thought nature, unfolds into further and ever further thoughts. When the soul allows this process to occur within itself, it is then supposedly lifted out of its usual being and interwoven with its activity into the spiritually supersensible world order. Then it is not the soul that thinks; the world-all thinks within the soul; the soul becomes a participant in a happening outside man into which man is merely interwoven; and in this way the soul experiences within itself what works and weaves in the depths of the world.

And yet, Hegel did not simply recapitulate Descartes, instead he operated at a higher level. Hegel saw that "highest and deepest thing that *is* and lives in the world is the creative reigning of thoughts, and I find myself as one of the ways this reigning element reveals itself."

[page 40] In this turn away from the individual thoughts of the soul and toward world thoughts above and beyond the soul, there lies the significant difference between Hegel and Descartes; Hegel made this turn; Descartes did not.

Steiner says that the essential element that Hegel sought was the "inwardly powerful element of a thought-life that wants to overcome itself within itself in order to lift itself into a realm where it is no longer living in itself but where the infinite thought, the eternal idea, is living in it," (Page 41); that through Hegel "German idealism has accomplished the affirmation of the supersensible nature of thinking." (Page 45); and "Whoever observes in its true form the world spread out before our senses recognizes that it is in reality a spiritual world." (Page 48)

Innovators often spend their time and energy trying to convince the world of the value of their ideas and it is left to others to implement them. Faraday, Tesla, Semmelweis, and the Wright Bros. are some who come to mind in this regard. Faraday after displaying one of his motor prototypes was asked by a woman, "Of what use is it?" He looked at her and replied, "My dear Lady, of what use is a baby?" Steiner makes a similar point about the three philosophers we have studied so far in this book.

[page 49] Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel appear in their full significance quite especially to someone who considers the far-reaching impetus they gave to personalities possessed of far less spiritual vigor than they. Something is moving and working in the souls of this trio of thinkers that could not come fully to expression within themselves. And what is working as the basic undertone in the souls of these thinkers works on in a living way in their successors and brings them to world views — in accordance with the spirit — that even the three great original thinkers themselves could not achieve because they had to exhaust their soul vigor, so to speak. in making the first beginnings.

In Immanuel Hermann Fichte, the son of Johann Gottlieb, we find a successor who is worthy of his father's legacy when he talks about dying as going through a process in which only the outer form of one's being changes. One was living one moment and one is [spiriting](#) the next. Here are his words:

[page 52] "For one hardly need ask here how the human being, in and for himself, conducts himself in this process of death. Man, in and for himself — even after the last, to us invisible, act of his life processes — remains, in his *essential being*, completely the same one he was before with respect to his *spirit* and *power of organization*. His integrity is preserved; for he has lost absolutely nothing of what was his and belonged to his substance during his visible life, He only returns in death into the invisible world; or rather, since he has never left the invisible world, since the invisible world is what actually *endures* within everything visible, he has only stripped off a particular form of visibility. 'To be dead' simply means to remain no longer perceptible to ordinary sense apprehension, in exactly the same way that what is actually real, the ultimate foundations of bodily phenomena, are also imperceptible to the senses."

It would seem that Fichte's definition of "to be dead" as meaning "no longer perceptible to ordinary sense perception" should replace the usual definitions of dead as *a. 1. having ceased to live. 2. having no life* (Cassel's Concise). If we hold in our mind that a dead person can no longer communicate with us through our senses, but remains otherwise living, i.e., *spiriting*, in the spirit world, we do a great favor to our loved ones who have departed, but are still present among us in spirit form. While we cannot perceive them with our earthly senses, they are able to perceive us — and we cause them *great psychic pain* if we pretend that they are dead in the dictionary sense. This insight gives credence and meaning to what are considered by some to be euphemisms to refer to someone as having, "passed", "made the transition", "gone on", among other expressions which indicate, instead of an end, a transformation of one's mode of existence.

Karl Christian Planck is another German philosopher whom Steiner resurrects from oblivion and breathes life into his mode of thought. Planck tried as Hegel to approach being through thinking, but was unable to do so.

[page 62] By virtue of its own nature, thinking seems to exclude itself from any communion with being. Nevertheless, this insight into thinking's alienation from being now becomes for Planck precisely the ray of light that falls upon the world riddle and solves it. If thinking makes absolutely no claim of bearing within itself anything at all in the way of reality, if it actually is true that thinking reveals itself to be something unreal, then precisely through this fact it proves itself to be an instrument for expressing reality. If it were itself something real, then the soul could weave only in *its* reality, and could not leave it again; if thinking itself is unreal, then it will not disturb the soul through any reality of its own; by thinking, man is absolutely not within any thought-reality; he is within a thought-unreality that precisely therefore does not force itself upon him with its own reality but rather expresses that reality of which it speaks. Whoever sees in thinking itself something real must, in Planck's view, give up hope of arriving at reality; since, for him, thinking must place itself between the soul and reality. If thinking itself is *nothing*, it can therefore also not conceal reality from our activity of knowing; then reality must be able to reveal itself in thinking.

Planck gives us an image of thinking giving itself up in order for the world to shine from its sacrifice. (Page 63) It echoes of the gift that Christ gave to the world during the Mystery of Golgotha:

*Thinking gives itself up
as Christ did:*

*To allow the world
to shine
Forth
From His gift*

To understand how Planck arrives at a picture of the world, read how he asks us to think about the Earth as we would a living tree planted in the ground. Is the trunk a reality? If that were so, we could find a living trunk without leaves or roots on the Earth, but there is no such thing to be found. To be sure we can

focus our eyes only upon the trunk and call the trunk reality, but in actuality, the trunk alone has no reality. The trunk must be alive to have reality.

[page 63] It can be what it is only insofar as those growth forces arise in it at the same time which unfold the leaves, blossoms, and fruits. In the reality of the trunk one must think these forces in addition and must be aware that the bare trunk gives a picture of reality deceiving to the beholder, The fact that something or other is present to the senses is not yet proof that in this form it is also a reality, The earth, pictured as the totality of what it manifests in mineral configurations and in the facts occurring within these configurations, is no reality, Whoever wants to picture something real about the earth must picture it in such a way that its mineral realm already contains within itself the plant realm, Just as the trunk configuration of the tree includes its leaves and blossoms; yes, that within the "true earth" the animal realm and man are already present along with it.

"Aha!" you might think, "I think of the Earth a planetary mineral body with plants, animals, and human beings upon it." You might say that you "picture the mineral earth, constituted of geological layers, with plants growing out of its surface, and with animals and human beings moving around on it." "But such an Earth does not exist at all!" Planck would respond. "It is only a delusion of your senses." — And your method of thinking, I might add, conditioned as it has been by the various -ologies such as geology, biology, and anthropology.

[page 64] On the other hand there is a true earth; it is a completely supersensible configuration, an invisible being, which provides the mineral foundation from out of itself; but it is not limited to this, for it manifests itself further in the plant realm, then in the animal realm, then in the human realm. Only that person has the right eye for the mineral, plant, animal, and human realm who beholds the entirety of the earth in its supersensible nature, and who feels, for example, how the picture of the material mineral realm by itself, without the picture of the soul evolution of mankind, is a delusion. Certainly, one can picture a material mineral realm to oneself; but one is living in a world-lie and not in the world-truth if, in doing so, one does not have the feeling that with a mental picture like this, one is caught in the same madness as a person who wanted to think that a man whose head has been struck off would calmly go on with his life.

As valuable as insightful as Planck's works were, they were passed over for Henri Bergson's works as his world view was "lightly woven and therefore more easily comprehensible to undemanding souls."

[page 68, 69] Bergson is led by his thoughts to a transformation of the widespread idea of the evolution of organic entities. He does not set at the beginning of this evolution the simplest organism and then think that, due to outer forces, more complicated organisms emerge from it all the way up to man; he pictures that, at the starting point of evolution, there stands a being that in some form or other already contains the impulse to become man. This being, however, can bring this impulse to realization only by first expelling from itself other impulses that also lie within it. By expelling the lower organisms, this being gains the strength to realize the higher ones. Thus man, in his actual being, is not what arose last, but rather what was at work first, before everything else. He first expels the other entities from his formative powers in order to gain by this preliminary work the strength to come forth himself into outer sense-perceptible reality.

But what Bergson claimed in his "scintillating lightly draped configuration of ideas" can be found earlier expressed Wilhelm Heinrich Preuss "a powerful and strongly thought-through way." (Page 69) Preuss taught that the human being is a species that occurs "only once on our planet." (Page 70)

[page 70] "Man is the goal of tellurian processes, and every other form arising besides him has borrowed Its traits from his. Man is the first-born being of the whole cosmos. . . . When the germs of his being had arisen, the remaining organic element no longer had the necessary strength to engender further human germs. What arose then was animal or plant. . . ."

When someone borrows and builds upon the writings of a predecessor, we can expect an improvement, especially if that person gives credit to the foundations used. But in Bergson's case he not only omitted credit to his German sources, but he condemned the German spiritual life all the while appearing to German writers such as Bönke to be a plagiarizer of German thought.

[page 72] That a person be stimulated by his predecessors is a natural thing in the evolution of mankind; what matters, however, is whether the stimulus leads to a process of further development or — and Bönke's presentation also makes this quite clear — leads to a process of regression as in Bergson's case.

The next personality in German idealism that Steiner reviews is Karl Julius Schröer, his German literary professor when Steiner entered the Vienna College of Technology in 1879, who later became his friend. To understand Schröer's contribution to idealism, we must investigate the Owl of Minerva metaphor of Hegel:

[page 84] When a thought is expressed, there is given it a certain coloring that does not allow it to enter right away the realm described by Hegel as the realm of philosophical knowledge when he said, "The task of philosophy is to grasp what is; for, what is reasonable is real, and what is real is reasonable. When philosophy paints its gray on gray then a form of life has become old; the owl of Minerva begins to fly only when dusk is descending."

This expansion on Hegel's metaphor helps one unfamiliar with it to understand the otherwise obscure metaphor of the owl:

[Hardt and Negri](#) say, "When philosophy paints its grey in grey, one form of life has become old, and by means of grey it cannot be rejuvenated, but only known. The owl of Minerva, takes its flight only when the shades of night are gathering."

But Schröer doesn't see gray on gray — but rather "ideas that in a color that ever refreshes and rejuvenates our deeper heart."

[page 84, 85] And what would have mattered much more to Schröer in this connection than thinking about the bird of evening was to think about the deeper human heart struggling for *light*, seeking in the world of ideas the sun of that realm in which our intellect, focused upon the finite and upon the sense world, should be feeling the extinguishing of *its light*.

Correcting the mistaken belief in materialism is as simple as Columbus's solution to standing an egg on its end: crush one end of the egg — it's a thought that lies outside of the realm of thought of the materialists, so, even though it solves the problem, the solution is unacceptable to them. In discussing the ideas of Bartholomaeus von Carneri, Steiner says:

[page 96, 97] Of course, an unshakable believer in materialism would find an objection like this absurd. But the difficulty of putting materialism in the right light lies precisely in this necessity of expressing such simple thoughts in order to do so. One must express thoughts that one can scarcely believe the adherents of materialism do not form for themselves. And so the biased charge can easily be leveled against someone trying to clarify materialism that he is using meaningless phraseology to counter a view that rests

upon the empirical knowledge of modern science and upon its rigorous principles. Nevertheless, the great power of materialism to convince its adherents arises only through the fact that they are unable to feel the weight of the simple arguments that destroy their view. Like so many others, they are convinced not by the light of logical reasons which they have examined, but by the force of habitual thoughts which they have not examined, which, in fact, they feel no immediate need to examine at all.

But Steiner says that Carneri differs from materialists who do not have this need at all. Carneri himself sets the polar opposites of materialism and metaphysics, calling one a corpse and the other a ghost. In between one will find the living human infused with spirit of Steiner's anthroposophy, which means the knowledge (sophia) of the full human being (anthropos) of body, soul, and spirit, in Carneri's words, "the creative heat of sentient life."

[page 98] Yes, Carneri has a real aversion to being counted among the materialists; he defends himself against this with statements like the following: "*Rigid materialism is just as one-sided as the old metaphysics: the former arrives at no meaning for its configurations; the latter arrives at no configurations for its meaning; with materialism there is a corpse; with metaphysics there is a ghost; and what they are both struggling for in vain is the creative heat of sentient life*" (*Fundamentals of Ethics*, p. 68).

Steiner sums up for us why there are so many materialists today and at the same time so few people who claim to be materialists. This is certainly more so true a century after Steiner wrote these words.

[pag 103] Today, many people say they are not materialists only because they lack the ability to understand that they are in fact materialists. One can flatly state that nowadays many people stop worrying about their materialism by pretending to themselves that in their view it is no longer necessary to call themselves materialists. One must nevertheless label them so.

The Austrian dialect poem by Joseph Mission is a gem which any father would gladly echo to his children and their offspring. This is a translation of Rudolf Steiner's High German prose version of Mission's famous poem.

[page 109, 111] Advice from my Father for my Travels

(Translation of Rudolf Steiner's High German prose version.)

Ignaz, now listen well to what I say to you; I am your father.

In God's name, since it must be so that you are to seek your fortune in the wide world,

Therefore I must tell you this; and what I tell you take well to heart.

I and your mother are old and have stayed at home; you know that nothing comes from that.

One slaves away, takes pains, works hard, and weakens oneself in the care of work

One does this out of love for one's children; what would one not do just so they will not fall into bad ways.

If later one becomes weak and sick, and hard times come,

Even they spring upon us lovingly if, when they come, proper honest children

Are standing by to help, so that one can more easily do what the state and life demands.

If good fortune should find you, don't live like a cavalier.

Stay as you were, in the golden mean of the middle road; do not budge from the right path of life.

Good fortune is round like a ball; it rolls just as easily away from as toward us.

If some effort does not succeed, or if a misfortune befalls you, do not speak of it to people.

Remain calm; let nothing show; do not be faint-hearted;

Pour out your troubles to God alone; beg him; I tell you, He makes everything better again!

To act troubled, to withdraw, to pull a sour face, to be whiny: nothing is achieved by that.

To let your head hang as though the chickens had eaten your bread away from you: That improves nothing bad, let alone making the good even better!

Guard the possessions you take with you; take a little care for the future.

If someone gives you something, just receive it, without affectation, and say: "God bless you!"

Listen, Ignaz, and remember this well: no one has ever been punished for being polite!

Don't act stubborn; new places make a person modest; this is a saying and a true word.

Don't be led astray into gambling; don't let the dance floor mean too much to you.

Don't let anyone read your future in the cards; and do not seek your destiny in the book of dreams.

If two paths lie before you and one of them is new, then you take the old one.

If one is crooked, which is often the case, then you take the straight one.

Protect your health; health is the best of all possessions.

Admit it to me, after all: What does one really possess in the world if one lacks health?

*

If you ever come back home and no longer find us old folk in this little room,

Then we are there where your grandfather and your grandmother await us with joy,

Where our benefactors and our dead relatives will find us!

They will all recognize us at once — and this, Ignaz, is something very — beautiful.

*

Steiner adds about Joseph Mission the poet of the above poem: "Mission cannot come into consideration as a thinker among the personalities portrayed in this book. Nevertheless, to picture his soul life gives one an understanding for the particular coloration of the ideas of Austrian thinkers." And it is the soul-life of these Austrian and German thinkers he focused upon in this book.

Another Austrian poet Steiner examines in detail is Robert Hamerling who quotes Jacobi, a contemporary of Goethe:

[page 122] "Experience and history teach us that man's action depends far less upon his thinking than his thinking depends upon his action, that his concepts direct themselves according to his actions and only copy them, as it were; that the path of knowledge, therefore, is a mysterious path, not a syllogistic one, nor a mechanical one."

And Steiner adds:

[page 124] One can also see in Hamerling how a person striving toward existence's ideas has a healthier sense for practical life than a person who, fearful of the spirit, shies away from the world of ideas and feels himself thereby to be a true "man of reality."

The last chapter of this book "New Perspectives" is described this way by the William Lindeman in his Translator's Introduction:

[page 1] The powerful ideas of the last chapter are like beings sent to wake us out of the disastrous mentality whose results were all around us in 1916. The impact of this chapter is far greater if the reader has taken the amazing journey (not meant for those seeking passive entertainment) of the preceding chapters, The German idealists' urgent quest for the spiritual world, often meeting with hatred or indifference, is dramatically vindicated there. The struggle of the higher individual to come through in us lives everywhere in this book, often expressed in striking and original terms, as in Jean Paul's question: "To what end and from where were these extraordinary potentials and wishes laid in us, which, bare as swallowed diamonds, slowly cut our earthly covering to pieces?"

It is nearly a century later as I type these words, and I wonder, "Are we not yet in a disastrous mentality whose results are everywhere around us in 2005?" If your answer to this question is "yes", is it not time for you, dear Reader, to eschew "passive entertainment" and "swallow these diamonds" so that when your earthly covering is shredded, you may see the spirit shining from beneath and take heart in the fate of humankind?

Does that mean returning to study these German thinkers and poets? Steiner says no.

[page 125] This need not mean returning to Fichte, Hegel, and the others in the hope that, by taking better paths from their starting points, one will thus arrive at better results.

No, that cannot be the point for us — to be "motivated" by these thinkers in this way — but rather to gain access to the sources from which they drew and to recognize what still lies hidden within these sources as motivating powers, in spite of the work of these thinkers.

A look at the spirit of the modern, natural-scientific way of picturing things (*Vorstellungsart*) can make one feel how much the idealism in world views living in the above thinkers is a promise awaiting fulfillment.

And promises awaiting fulfillment can only be unfolded by the living among us at this time. These words of the German thinkers, of Steiner, and of mine are like Sleeping Beauty suspended in time awaiting some curious Reader to kiss her awake and continue her life of fulfillment. Will you pass her bed, and leave only to report to others what you found thereupon? Or will you kiss these words awake into fulfillment?

One can start by absorbing these next words of Steiner about natural science and its adherents who mostly are ignorant of them:

[page 127] To anyone who penetrates into the true meaning of modern natural science, it is clear that this science does not undermine knowledge of the spiritual world, but rather supports and ensures it. One will not be able to arrive at this clarity, however, by imagining oneself, through all kinds of theoretical arguments, to be an opponent of a knowledge of the spiritual world, but rather by turning one's gaze upon what makes the natural-scientific picture of the world sensible and meaningful. The natural-scientific way of picturing things excludes everything from what it studies that is experienced through the inner being of the human soul. It investigates how things and processes relate to each other. What the soul, through its inner being, can experience about things serves only to reveal how things are, irrespective of these inner experiences.

The picture that natural science makes of the world is as real as the image one can observe of a friend in the mirror. One does not expect the friend to come out of the mirror, does one?

[page 128, 129] . . . the *real world*, from which one has gained the picture of a "silent and dark" world, does not actually remain silent and dark when one perceives in it. But I should no more expect this picture to correspond to the real world than I would expect the portrait of a friend to step out of his picture as a real person. Just look at the matter from all sides, without preconceptions, and you will certainly find that if the world were as natural science depicts it, no being would ever experience anything about it. To be sure, the world pictured by natural science is there, in a certain way, within the reality from which man perceives his sense world; but lacking in this picture is everything by which it could be perceived by some being. What this way of picturing things must posit as underlying light, sound, warmth does not shine, sound, or warm. Only by experience does one know that the pictures arrived at by this way of thinking were drawn from something shining, sounding, warming; one therefore lives in the belief that what one pictures is also something shining, sounding, and warming.

Goethe was a scientist could experience something shining luminously in the world of colors, and he created an understanding of color based directly upon observation, not upon theory. Newton — to the contrary — based his understanding of color upon an abstract theory and natural scientists have followed Newton, blindly in the matter, up until now.

[page 130] Goethe understood that Newton's color theory could provide a picture representing only a world that is not luminous and does not shine forth in colors. Since Goethe did not involve himself in the demands of a purely natural-scientific world picture, his actual opposition to Newton went astray in many places. But the main thing is that he had a correct feeling for the fundamental issue. When a person, by means of light, observes colors, he is confronting a different world from the only one Newton is able to describe. And Goethe does observe the real world of colors. But if one enters a realm such as this — whether of colors or of other natural phenomena — one needs other ideas than those depicted in the "dark and silent world" imagined by the natural-scientific way of picturing things. In this picture, no reality is depicted that can be perceived. *Real* nature simply does in fact already contain within itself something that cannot be included in this picture. The "dark world" of the physicist could not be perceived by any eye; light is already spiritual. Within the sense-perceptible the spiritual holds sway.

To understand how physicists and other natural scientists go astray, let us look back at how Steiner characterized Hamerling's thoughts:

[page 118] The whole train of Hamerling's thoughts is worth no more than this: Certain effects emanating from me onto the surface of a coated pane of glass produce my image in the mirror. Nothing occurs through the effects emanating from me if no mirror is there. Outside the mirror there is only the sum total of those determining factors which bring it about that in the mirror an image is produced that I refer to with my name.

Holding that in mind, read now what Steiner says about human experience and natural scientists who base their experience solely on the sensory apparatus of the body:

[page 132] Human soul experience, as it manifests in thinking, feeling, and willing. is at first bound to the bodily instruments. And this experience takes shape in ways determined by these instruments. If someone asserts, however, that when he observes the manifestations of the soul through the body he is seeing the real life of the soul, he is then caught up in the same error as someone who believes that *his* actual *form* is brought forth by the mirror in front of him just because the mirror possesses the necessary prerequisites through which his *image* appears.

In other words, the natural scientist mistakes a reflection for reality, and accuses in turn those who directly experience the reality, such as Rudolf Steiner, of hallucinating!

[page 133] The materialistic view of the human soul succumbs to a deception caused by the fact that ordinary consciousness, which is only there through the bodily instruments, is mistaken for the soul itself. The essential being of the soul flows just as little into this ordinary consciousness as my essential being flows into my mirror image. This essential being of the soul, therefore, also cannot be found in ordinary consciousness; it must be *experienced outside* of this consciousness. And it can be experienced, for the human being can develop a different consciousness within himself than the one determined by the bodily instruments.

The natural scientist has two barriers in the way to correct thinking about the reality of the world which surrounds all of us:

[page 134] A person who cannot resolve to discover something different in his soul life than is offered him by ordinary consciousness will either deny that the essential being of the soul can be known, or will flatly declare that this being is produced by the body.

[135] The second barrier arises because natural-scientific thinking must rightly declare that the experiences of ordinary consciousness come about through the bodily instruments and therefore, in reality, contain nothing of any soul.

There is much, much more in this fine book than any cursory review can express. If you approach it with a weak resolve — like a weak stomach cannot hold strong food, you will receive little nourishment from it — it will spill out its contents untouched as soon as you have ingested them.

We are surrounded by so-called Christians who, as natural scientists, posit a materialistic view of the world in their work, and never come to understand the egregious error of their way of thinking while working as natural scientists. They can only feel comfortable as Christian thinkers because so many churches have introjected wholly the materialistic views of natural science and have yet to acknowledge the contradiction between a true Christian view which acknowledges a spiritual being of the human soul and natural science which absolutely denies such a possibility.

Steiner summarizes how Lauren Müllner as an unbiased Christian would put the case. We will allow these two men, one speaking for the other, to have the last word on this greatest riddle of man which dogs humankind to this day:

[page 160] The world view of German idealism often came to appear as antithetical to beliefs declaring themselves, with very dubious justification, to be descendants of Christian teachings. It is far more a matter of the antithesis between a world view that acknowledges the spiritual being of the soul and a world view that can find no access to this spiritual being; it is a matter of antithesis to a misunderstood natural-scientific way of picturing things, and not toward the rightly understood Christian world view, which, in the genuine spiritual experiences of the human soul, could see only the revelations of divine power and wisdom, through which the experiences of religious devotion and moral edification — as well as the powers of human duty sustained by love — could only attain further strength.

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