

176<sub>19</sub> 222

L. R. TWENTYMAN

# THE NATURE OF MAN

APPROACHED THROUGH  
THE PHILOSOPHY OF  
RUDOLF STEINER

Twenty-Second  
Foundation Lecture

1982



---

*New Atlantis Foundation*

УНИВЕРЗИТЕТСКА БИБЛИОТЕКА  
СВЕТИ САНДЖО - БЕОГРАД  
Бр. 174233



10-11-37-38-3  
W 1519  
800,00  
obradp

# THE NATURE OF MAN APPROACHED THROUGH THE PHILOSOPHY OF RUDOLF STEINER

How can we today approach this problem of human nature which has been a central issue in the culture of every age? We are living in a time intellectually dominated by the methodology of that natural science which came into existence in the 16th and 17th centuries and which has progressively transformed both our outer civilisation with its technology and our inner life of values and meanings with its compulsive materialism. This natural science has become the main factor for good and ill in our modern world and yet it remains an enigmatic factor, difficult to grasp, chaotic in its conceptions but calling forth unprecedented expenditure of material and intellectual resources. There is an understandable revulsion against the consequences of the technologies which arise from this natural scientific movement and threaten our outer civilisation and even the planet itself with disasters of many kinds. We have become alarmed by the pollution of our outer and inner environments and disgusted by the ruthless exploitation of Mother Nature in pursuit of commercial, political and military supremacies. Unfortunately much of this revulsion wishes only to go back to before this terrifying age, to a pre-scientific conception of things. Apart from the impossibility of putting the clock back to a time which we would certainly find morally as well as physically and intellectually unspeakably cramped and unacceptable, we should also perhaps be in danger of throwing away the baby with the bath water, were we to be able to do so. Can we hope to discover the baby, that child of our natural science, which, to judge from the crisis of our time, is in

great need of nurture and education if it is to grow up to a healthy and fruitful maturity? To do so we shall first have to recall the salient features of this scientific movement and come up against the limitations of knowledge which have arisen in its path and to which Rudolf Steiner drew most particular attention.

Man has today become overwhelmed by the avalanche of precise scientific knowledge, based on the accurate measurements of sense phenomena mathematically developed, which accumulates in ever increasing quantities. By comparison with the seeming precision of this work, the world of qualities, of tones, colours, smells and of emotions, appears as a bewildering kaleidoscope of changing dream pictures in which no certainty is to be found. And yet it is in the midst of all these qualities that we live and experience our life. These phenomena are not easily shared and made verifiable; like actual dreams they are largely private and subjective, communicable perhaps only through the media of art. By contrast the world of science appears verifiable and objective, that is to say shareable and subject to law, but it has become empty of content and meaning, abstract and dehumanised. Nevertheless we should recall that none other than Goethe saw and was deeply moved exactly by the rule of law, even in Art itself.

Up until the scientific revolution, some four centuries or so ago, this stark division between the world of human experience and the world of scientific measurement and calculation had not been established. Nature was conceived both quantitatively and qualitatively and man was conceived as Microcosm within the Macrocosm. What is more, Nature was felt, and even experienced, to be peopled by elemental spirits and there were the encircling spheres of heaven with the hierarchies of spiritual beings. It was a complex, subtle conception of the world, full of meanings, purposes and mysteries, and full of wonder. In Astrology and Alchemy, the study of the stars and of substances in their movements and transformations was pursued out of a consciousness which still found psycho-spiritual forces, beings and qualities intimately permeating the physical bodies and substances. Everything was still living, the full impact of death had not been felt.

At the end of the Middle Ages Western man became obsessed

with death and with its image the skeleton. There were dances of death, rituals of death, wrestling with the fact of death and its meaning. At the beginning of the new age of natural science the first text book of human anatomy to be based on accurate dissection of the human corpse was published by Vesalius in 1543 and marks the beginning of so-called scientific medicine. In the same year there was published Copernicus' book of the anatomy of the corpse of the solar system. The methodology for pursuing this new view of things was established by Galileo and philosophically by Descartes. A division was established between what could be measured and weighed and those other properties of colour, tone, taste, smell and so on. The first were called primary qualities and considered to be real and objective, whereas the second were relegated as secondary qualities to being subjective, and 'only in the mind'. The movement of human consciousness which from distant antiquity had progressively lost its awareness of the divine, spiritual world now curtailed yet further its scope by distinguishing that which could be known through the sense of touch from the content of all the other senses. Only what could be touched was real, that is to say in a crude way only matter. One recalls in passing how Dr. Johnson refuted Berkeley's Idealism by kicking a stone. Science proceeded to turn colours and tones into vibrations and particles so as to be able to handle and measure them with its mechanical concepts, although in doing so it lost sight of and eliminated the very realities it was supposed to be studying. When Goethe opened the way to a scientific study of colour as such the scientific establishment showed and continues to show neither understanding nor interest. Science claims to be based exclusively on sense experience, but it has not only excluded all suprasensory experience; it has also excluded all the senses themselves with the sole exception of the sense of touch, to which it has rather mistakenly attributed objectivity. To be more precise, it interprets the other senses in terms of concepts related to touch, which enables all phenomena to be treated mechanically. It should be further noted that measurements of matter and motion are then developed by mathematical techniques; and there has been a tendency to regard these as indubitably clear and self-evident, as given a priori, although they are in fact based on self-contradictory fictions.

Now I have had to bring forward these considerations in order to come to confrontation with the natural scientific conception of Man which is taught today to all children in our Western world. Man is limited to the matter and its motions of which our bodies are composed. There is nothing special about living as distinct from dead or mineral things other than complexity; there is nothing special about animate beings as distinct from merely vegetable or living things. Feelings are the life of the nervous tissue. And Man is only another animal with a larger more complex brain which exudes thoughts. All this moreover is understood, or at any rate taught, as coming into existence under the exclusive play of blind natural forces, mechanical forces, because for our modern natural science nature herself is mechanical through and through. In so far as living things, organisms, are not graspable by mechanical models then our human intellect cannot grasp them and we must resign ourselves to helpless and hopeless ignorance. We come up against one of the limits of cognition which Steiner maintains afford us experiences of the greatest significance for the future.

How then can we characterise the phenomena of living organisms which present essential problems to the human intellect? In the first place the uniformity in structure of minerals, for instance crystals, makes their characteristic form indifferent to size. A crystal of common salt has the same form whether it has the size of a microscopic grain or of a room. It is not, so to say, inwardly differentiated and organised but has only a uniform structure throughout. A living organism on the other hand carves out for itself a characteristic space, of a characteristic size neither smaller nor larger within limited variations. Elephants and mice have their characteristic sizes. Further this space is inwardly differentiated and organised into tissues and organs which, whilst distinct, are mutually interdependent and together constitute a whole. This whole lies latent in all its parts so that when we propagate, for instance, a Begonia from a single leaf, it is able to develop afresh root, stem, leaves and blossom.

There is further a relation to time which distinguishes the living from the lifeless. For the mineral, length of life is not significant. Whether a salt crystal lasts a second or thousands of years makes no difference to our understanding of it, of the laws

which express its nature. But with living beings, they are characterised as much by their life span as by their size; they carve out an organism both in space and in time. The idea of the rose must comprise its whole development in time from seed and germination through unfolding of cotyledons to stems and leaves to the blossoming and fruiting. We are faced with the marvellous phenomena of metamorphosis from one form into another whilst together they are the rose. An inner realm of manifoldness comes to ordered manifestation in time.

Mechanical events, such as the collision of billiard balls and their rebound movements, can be expressed mathematically in concepts related only externally to them. These are the laws of motion, the ideal component of the whole event. In the case of living organisms the ideal component, the law of their being and growth, is inwardly active and comes to manifestation in their metamorphoses, their growth and their life processes. The ideal element in a plant, which is thus an active reality manifesting outwardly in form, is not accessible to our ordinary intellectual consciousness in the same way as the laws of motion. Here is the first serious obstacle on our path. If we are to understand living organisms we must become able to grasp this ideal element with intensified powers of cognition. To these intensified cognitional capacities Steiner gave the name Imagination. He characterised in great detail their nature and the methods by which they can be cultivated. He also pointed to Goethe as that person who had pioneered this path to the scientific study of living creatures, comparing him to Galileo in the study of mechanics. For the manifoldness, the real ideal element of living things, Steiner used the terms Etheric body or body of formative forces.

It is important to realise that this Etheric body and the Etheric forces do not belong to the Euclidean space in which physical bodies and forces are studied. To these belong gravity and electro-magnetic forces and characteristically they relate point-wise, between one point and another. Gravity acts from the centre and so these forces diminish with distance according to strict mathematical law. The Etheric forces, on the contrary, act from the periphery and work suctionally, levitationally. Steiner indicated that the so-called Synthetic or Projective Geometry, brought to a certain perfection in the 19th century

and characterised by Cayley as the whole of geometry, would make it possible to study these etheric forces with mathematical clearness of thought. The late George Adams was able to pioneer these studies particularly in relation to plant forms and metamorphosis. Now the importance of this work for our present purpose is to establish that human cognition can be trained to become inwardly mobile as it has to be in Projective Geometry without losing that clarity of awake consciousness which is the character of mathematical thinking. The etheric forces belong to what George Adams called negative Euclidean space, which arises from the interplay or interweaving of planes as distinct from the points of normal Euclidean space. The primary polarity of space is between the infinitely contracted point and the infinitely expanded plane. Thus positive Euclidean space arises from the relationship between points, negative Euclidean space from the relationship between planes. I can of course only indicate these lines of study on this occasion.

The vegetable kingdom expresses the play of these planar forces working from the periphery. That we can see them in the leaves with our physical eyes is due to the physical substances which are caught up into them as the physical body of the plant. In the plant therefore we have the etheric planar forces from the cosmic periphery in their interplay with the physical forces related to the earth centre. These etheric forces become to some extent individually organised to form what can be called the etheric body of the plant: the word 'body' is of course not entirely satisfactory.

In the plant kingdom everything is, so to say, spread out, it grows out into spatial manifestation. When we come to study the animal kingdom another gesture confronts us. A gesture of interiorisation develops. Instead of growing outwards the developing organism turns in on itself and forms a cup-like form. More and more infoldings come about and gradually there arise the wonderfully internally organised bodies of the higher animals. It is not difficult to see that a quite distinct element of form here comes to expression. It pushes inwards, creating inner spaces; what in the plant was still outside now becomes interiorised into the animal. This something then manifests in movement and sensation, in desire and pleasure and pain. Something comes to



expression which we must call a soul element. This in itself is not in space at all, yet it can find physiognomical expression in these formative gestures of embryogenesis. We all know how emotions such as fear and shame bring about changes in the physical body such as blanching and blushing, and how emotions and feelings of pain and pleasure find utterance in sounds issuing forth from the inner depths of animate beings. The living body can then be spoken of as becoming ensouled. A soul quality incarnates into and forms the organism as its outer expression. This quality becomes visible in the physiognomical form and observable also in its behaviour and in those sounds and tones which are its so direct utterance. For this soul element, creative of animal form and behaviour and the bearer of desires and pleasure and pain, Steiner used the term Astral Body or Soul Body. The powers of cognition needed to apprehend this element of existence must be strengthened again beyond the powers of Imagination needed for perceiving the etheric body. To such strengthened power Steiner gave the name Inspiration. Just as we can regard Imagination as a higher metamorphosis of vision, so Inspiration can be approached as a higher metamorphosis of hearing.

The mammals of the animal kingdom can now be seen as the incarnation of different soul qualities or emotions, the courage of the lion, the ferocity of the tiger, the cunning of the fox, the fearfulness of the rabbit, the bestowing benevolence of the cow. The whole world of the emotions finds its physiognomic and behavioural manifestation in the realm of the mammals. They are emotions incarnate. And the birds for their part are thoughts. The eagle soars on the majestic wings of philosophic vision. The sparrows are crowds of chattering cockneys. The lark rises and falls on lyrical outpourings, and we find the whole world of our thoughts expressed in the flight and other behaviour of birds and especially in their feathers, their plumage.

How then do they stand in relation to Man? It belongs to the commonly accepted dogmas of our time that Man is, at least in respect of his bodily organisation, just another animal, the highest and most developed mammal, the summit of the Primates. If there are certain capacities especially developed in Man these can be regarded as evolving out of the more instinctive behaviour



and faculties of animals. The basic structure of the human body, its organs and systems are similar to those of the higher animals. A vertebral back bone, four limbs, a head, chest and abdominal cavities, a system of senses based on eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin, these features compel one to acknowledge a common nature or idea which appears in varied modifications in the different species, families and orders. The question is whether the modifications of this basic vertebrate plan found in the human kingdom are derivable from the same forces and principles as underlie the animal forms. The basic building plan may be similar but the way in which it is carried out may yet reveal a quite distinct principle at work within the human organism.

In the first place we have to take note of the retention of more embryo-like features in the human development. The mature human form has not evolved further from the embryonic than the animal has, it has on the contrary remained nearer to the embryonic. If we study the development of various species through their embryonic and post-embryonic developments we find that the earlier we look the more do the various embryos resemble each other. As they mature so do they fall more and more into diverse specialisation: only the human retains an omnipotentiality. The bodily organisation of animals becomes specialised into instruments, the wings of birds, the fins of fishes, the claws of carnivores, the hoofs of herbivores and so on. The animals becomes imprisoned in these organic formations, they determine its life.

But in the case of the human, the limbs for instance do not become these specific tools. The human being on the contrary develops the ability to invent the tools and then to use them. Aeroplanes, oars of boats, boots, knives and forks and the rest of our inventions which we can freely use, these in the animals have taken hold of their bodily organisation and the limb has become the specific tool not the user of it.

Further, the orientation in space of the animal and human forms points to radical differences in essential principle. The spinal organisation of animals is characteristically horizontal; only in man does it become vertical, a spinal column. In animals the head is only a continuation of the vertebrae; in man it crowns the vertebral column and morphologically repeats in a synthetic mode the whole lower trunk in a new and higher form. The

whole body is indeed reflected in the head. And if in the ascent to the vertical the human succeeds in giving freedom to the head, balanced, poised, almost free flying, it also gives the legs over to the earth; only the human form has a straight knee. The human, through legs, truly columns, grows down on to the earth, stands and walks upon the earth. Animals only touch the earth, mostly only with the tips of their fingers and toes. In the human form are expressed the extreme polarities, related both to heaven and earth and holding the balance between them, refusing to fall one-sidedly into any speciality. Does not this point to something active in the human being which brings about this upright stance, and also brings about walking, speaking and thinking; something which organically gives evidence of its existence in the holding back from the animal limitations. This something says no to the fall into mere animal existence, mere imprisonment in the determinism of organic form and adaptation to the special environment. This something, when it first becomes conscious of itself, manifests by saying 'No' to its mother's orders. Usually this comes about at around 3 years of age.

This inhibiting action also shows itself in the slow maturation of the human being, sexual maturity being achieved only at around 14 years of age. In the human, moreover, this sexual maturity marks the beginning of the individual's mental and emotional flowering. Our organisms too go on developing into our late twenties. In animals sexual maturity marks a culmination, and gradual ageing without further unfolding of new faculties sets in. Enough has been said to indicate in which directions we must turn our attention in order to become aware of the fourth element or principle in Man which distinguishes him from the animal realm and to which Steiner points as the Ego or spiritual kernel in Man. To the yet greater cognitional power which can unite itself with the spiritual realities Steiner gave the name Intuition.

We have thus been led to distinguish four elements, constituents or principles which together form the nature of the human being. Firstly a physical body of mass and inertia, through which man is related to the dead world of the mineral kingdom. Secondly an etheric body of lightness and dynamics, through which life unfolds and which man shares with the living kingdom

of the plant kingdom. Thirdly a soul or astral body, the bearer of the inner world of desire, pleasure and pain and the qualitative world of emotions. This man shares with the animal kingdom, and it finds expression also in animals' physiognomic forms, gestures and behaviour. It already marks a turning inwards, backwards on itself, of the more outwardly growing vegetative life. It expresses itself especially in the katabolic, down-breaking phase of metabolic processes, and we can see how the inner soul experience is purchased at the cost of a certain destruction of the upbuilding anabolic vegetative process. The fourth principle, the Ego principle in Man, comes to expression in the upright posture and walking, in the speaking and thinking of the human being. This principle by entering into the three bodily elements begins to transform them so that they begin a process of metamorphosis in which the meaning of the future evolution of human life can be envisaged.

We must however attempt to clarify the relationship between Man and Nature from another side, that of past evolution. The great achievements of 19th century natural science compelled us all to accept an evolutionary process in which transformation of natural forms and species unfolded. In place of the omnipotent creative fiat of God, through which the distinctive forms and creatures came into existence once and for all, there was unfolded the picture of a gradual evolutionary development in which new forms came into manifestation. A real development of new, unforeseen forms came about, an epigenesis of new formations, not merely the unfolding of those already spatially present. And all this was explained by Darwin and his successors as coming about by natural forces acting blindly without aim or intention. At the summit of this process, often portrayed as a genealogical tree, appeared Man, the product of purely natural forces, the last to appear.

When however we turn our attention to actual biological events we find that a seed from a specific plant will grow only into that plant. Only an ovum from an elephant will grow into an elephant or from a lion into a lion. In the ovum no trace of the future organs and forms is visible; these unfold epigenetically. Yet a supersensible real Idea of the coming organism must be active from a supersensible or spiritual world to organise the

embryogenesis so that an elephant or lion results. The modern work on genes and so on does not affect this argument, as one still has to account for the turning on or off of genetic information in different cells and regions of the developing organism. And this organising system is supersensory, ideal in nature. Here we must call on Goethe's perception of the Idea.

Returning to the field of Evolution we are then faced with the question as to how Man appeared at the completion of the evolutionary process, which must be regarded as an embryonic process extended over vast periods of time. Must not the Idea of Man have been acting from non-spatial realms throughout the evolutionary-embryogenesis of Man? As in an artistic work, the final picture becomes clearer and clearer. We can then understand the natural kingdoms as having been cast out from the developing human form, somewhat as bits of marble are chipped away from the statue as it becomes gradually visible under the sculptor's hammer and chisel. These natural forms can then only harden and become fixed in their limitations. But the further clearing and perfecting of the human form was brought about by these lower forms sacrificing any further evolution for themselves. Only Man continued to evolve. In this sense Man was the first being in the evolutionary development, but the last to reach manifestation. The *whole* reaches expression in the human form: only partial functions are expressed in the forms of animals and vegetables. Man is synthesis, nature analysis. Steiner portrayed the evolutionary process in great rhythmic periods in which impulses from spiritual beings were active, and Dr. Karl König was able to show the correspondences between these macrocosmic processes and phases and the microcosmic ones of human embryogenesis. In these evolutionary periods not only have physical forms evolved; the etheric and astral bodies have also become further developed and perfected beyond the stage of their first appearance.

We have been approaching the understanding of how the developing human form became more and more an image of the whole. We can call spirit by the name of wholeness, and so we can begin to grasp the human form as the image of the spiritual. Thus the full achievement of the evolutionary development of Man required that the Infinite, the Whole, should become fully



realised and conscious to itself in a single person. The Christian revelation is witness to the truth that in Christ Jesus the Whole became incarnated in a human person: he was Infinite and he knew it. By this the Earth evolution achieved its meaning. In the periods of organic evolution, the mixed confusions of the earlier forms had first to be clarified by the elimination of the animal forms until the human became manifested. But there was still that confusion in the more spiritual nature of Man which has been known in religious terminology as Original Sin, originating in the so-called Fall of Man. Through this Man had remained unable to attain to full realisation of Truth, particularly of the nature of death. Through the Christ event Man achieved his goal in one person and became the world-organ of truth-knowing. From now on the task is the gradual transformation of the old natural, unaccomplished forms in which the full human and divine are not manifest. To these belong all our social forms and institutions which like Dinosaurs still stalk about, and all those old atavistic emotional aspects of our inner lives which still make us miserable with our egotistical, criminal and neurotic impulses.

But we must return from a glimpse of the future into the present and try to follow Steiner into the web of the so-called psychosomatic problem—the problem of how our immortal souls and spirits are related to our mortal and spatial bodies.

When at the beginning of our modern age Galileo and Descartes reduced objective existence to the purely corporeal, devoid of all positive properties, and consigned those properties to an attic of subjectivity, they formulated in new terms the body-soul question. They mistakenly converted what was justified as a fiction of science into an unjustified affirmation of a truth of fact. Descartes himself sought to relate the utterly immaterial soul to the utterly mechanistic and material body through the pineal gland, an effort which must leave most moderns bewildered. On the whole the dogmas of our science today seek to locate the soul exclusively in the nervous system, an equally bewildering concept; if indeed it can even be called a concept. It would seem to arise from the experience that I look out through my eyes and therefore must be behind them. But the concepts of a purely subjective soul and purely objective body

are totally sundered, as the philosophers Coleridge, Bergson, Whitehead and others have understood. This association between the head and the thinking mind was first made in Greek times by the Pythagoreans in Southern Italy. But the word *phren* (φρήν) also enshrines the earlier Greek experience of the mind in the diaphragm or midriff. At the beginning of the 19th century Lavater, the creator of scientific physiognomy, related the intellectual, emotional and volitional faculties to the upper, middle and lower regions of the face respectively. It was a short step to relate these again to the head, chest and abdominal realms, a realisation that led Jaworski to his biological insights and synthesis. These were attempts to find spatial homes for the soul and its faculties of thinking, feeling and willing.

Steiner took up this question afresh and sought the bodily foundations of thinking, feeling and willing in the processes of the nerve-sense system, the rhythmic system, and the metabolic-limb system respectively. Each of these functional systems is all-pervading. It is true that the nerve-sense processes predominate in the head, that rhythmic processes come to fullest expression in the rhythms of breathing and heart beat within the chest, and that the metabolic processes are most powerfully active in the abdomen and limbs, although extending throughout the organism. Nevertheless nerve-sense processes are everywhere, even in every cell, and equally there are metabolic and rhythmic processes in every nerve cell. The three processes interpenetrate and together form the whole.

Steiner understood the soul and spirit as real entities which are effectively active, and not as mere onlookers in the manner the experimental disciplines of science have enforced on us. During the embryonic and childhood periods these soul-spirit realities are active in the building and organising of the body as their physiognomic expression. The unconscious or superconscious thinking activity organises the brain, and having completed this task is progressively set free from its organic responsibilities, starting from the change of teeth at about seven years of age. It can then carry on its thinking as a pure spiritual activity. That we can become conscious of this activity is due to the brain, which acts as a mirror. Without this mirror we would not become conscious of our thinking. This reflecting process wakes us up so

that our consciousness in thinking is what we call waking consciousness. In this we clearly distinguish ourselves from the objects of our observation, and the logical connection of our thoughts is transparent as in mathematical thinking. It will also be evident that the mirrored thoughts of our consciousness are only images, and devoid of living reality. They can no longer rule us, we are free to move amongst them. But this killing of the living, active, thoughts into lifeless images represents also the archetypal activity of the nervous system, it is a paralysing action. The forms of our bodies are also the working of the nervous processes, which if unhindered would lead to our becoming frozen sculptured images, and to the living moving ever changing processes themselves becoming paralysed. Steiner insisted that all nerves are sensory. There are no real motor nerves, only sensory nerves of movement. Almost all modern research into nervous activity has to do either with electrical, chemical or metabolic processes or else with rhythmic processes such as are revealed in electroencephalograms. But these have to do with the metabolic or rhythmic activity in the nervous organs and not with the true nervous function. Steiner emphasised that the true nervous function would not be accessible to ordinary physiological researches, and so it has proved. We are up against another of the limits of knowledge. Only when ideation is present is there neural activity. Only during thinking is the brain a brain. What can be observed by empirical physiology is never the neural function. 'The activity of the nerves is precisely that in them which is not perceptible by the senses . . .'. To follow the nervous activity we shall have to make use of Imaginative cognition.

To turn now to the emotional life, where we experience the constant interplay of sympathy and antipathy, of love and hate, and all their development into complex emotions. The bodily foundation of this feeling Steiner finds in the rhythmic processes and more especially in the breathing rhythm. Ancient languages used the same word for breath and soul, as in the Latin *Anima*. Again, in the book of Genesis we read, 'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.' Throughout the entire organism there are constant and most varied rhythmic movements: not only the in and out breathing



and the pulse beat, but the intestinal movements, the kidney functions, sleeping and waking, and other rhythms of all our functions and organs. One can envisage the organism as a supreme symphony with many diverse organs whose varied times are woven together into a great harmony-filled interplay of rhythms. On all this our emotional life plays in a dream consciousness. We are not in full awake consciousness in our feelings; they weave to and fro in that state of consciousness which we experience in dreams and which does not rise to the clear awakeness and conceptual sharpness of waking life. When we breathe in we awake a little, and when we breathe out we go a little more to sleep. The great rhythm of our earth life commences with our first in-breath and ends with our final expiration. To follow these processes we must rise to Inspirational cognition.

The will activities are even more difficult to follow because in them the soul plunges down into the bodily processes, brings about real changes and effects, and in moving the limbs brings about objective changes in the world. Of how we do these things we are unconscious: to them the word magical can justly be applied. The consciousness of the will activities is a sleep consciousness and in them the soul and spirit continue a mode of existence characteristic of embryonic and childhood life. Only with Intuitive consciousness can we penetrate consciously into these realms.

We can now characterise these three functional realms in another way and recognise that our nerve processes centred in the head are old. Death processes predominate but consciousness is most awake. Our head does very little, all our life it gets carried around and spends its time observing rather critically the goings on around. Basically it is based on memory, looking back even, as Plato saw, to pre-natal existence. By contrast the life of the metabolic-limb system is for ever young. We walk into the future but look backwards in memory in our head system. In our emotional rhythmic processes we live in the present, in the immediate experiences of our pleasure and pain, our love and hate.

So do we see yet again how Man unites the spiritual, or continuum of wholeness, with the material bodily world of diversity and discreteness, and the past and future with the present. It is the nature of Man to unite two worlds, and he is that spiritual

being, that Ego, whom one can meet in this spatial world, shake hands with, and come to know in his biography. For in the biography of the individual man we can find evidence of his individuality stamped on all that he does and that happens to him. It is not the events common to man as a species that constitute the biography, it is rather all that is exceptional and unique. In this uniqueness of the biography one sees the utter distinction of the human from the animal. An animal's life story is only an example of the species, the potentialities of which come to expression and vary only according to the circumstances. But in the case of Man, every biography is unique and it is the uniqueness which reveals the individuality, the spiritual kernel in the man. It is also possible to trace between the phases of a man's life the operation of a moral law of cause and effect. And we can see how the individuality wrestles with the experiences which destiny brings and builds a sort of seed kernel within the ageing, hardening husk of the body. This inner growth in man can continue right up until bodily death.

I must now approach one last aspect of our subject, the nature of man. To omit this would utterly distort Steiner's approach of the subject. But we may first agree that the basic outlines as I have presented them are in essential content the same as have been presented in Oriental religions, in Platonism and neo-Platonism, and in the thought of many mystics throughout the ages. What is most significant in Steiner's work is that he accepted as foundation the scientific revolution. As Owen Barfield has pointed out, this revolution resulted in matter being utterly freed from contamination by all psychic and even sensory qualities, and all so-called occult qualities. These were thrown into the realm of 'only in the mind'. Science proceeded to study the mineral world and its mechanisms. The mineral world is so much a dead world, excreted from and by the living, that man is related to it almost only as an observer. In his study of it and the development of the abstract thinking applied in science he was for this very reason however able to develop the germs of freedom. In this onlooker consciousness he is left uninfluenced by what he observes. This thinking now became the Trojan Horse, to use Barfield's phrase, in the citadel of science, because it was itself a supersensible element in the cognitional process. It was by strengthening and

developing the potentialities in this thinking into active Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition that Steiner was able to develop the realm of spiritual science as distinct from natural science. With clear methodology he was able to develop the observation of soul and spirit as free from all traces of matter, thus complementing the natural scientific methodology which had purged matter of all soul and spirit. And this observation of the spiritual was conducted in full waking consciousness. In this relation to the scientific revolution lies the great importance of Steiner's work. It makes accessible again to modern man the fruits of man's original vision, the primal spiritual revelation to our distant ancestors, without loss of our achievement of freedom in our wide awake consciousness. This freedom we can now recognise as that offspring of the scientific revolution which must at all costs be protected and nurtured.

The aspect which I am approaching lies in the range of the phenomena of metamorphosis. In the vegetable kingdom we can observe the metamorphosis of the leaf into sepals, petals, stamens, pistils, fruit and seed. We can see the transformation from stage to stage, and observe them lying spread out together. In the animal kingdom the metamorphoses present us with a greater cognitional challenge: one manifestation vanishes and another comes into being. The caterpillar disappears from this world, from the chrysalis emerges the butterfly. Something quite new in form appears and we are hard put to it to grasp caterpillar, chrysalis and butterfly in their unity as metamorphoses of one being. We have to hold our breath as we take a leap over the abyss.

The leap in the case of the human metamorphosis is far greater, according to the observations of Steiner. Following the course of the soul and spirit after death in passing out of the spatial world and its material embodiment, he describes the spiritual metamorphoses culminating in a new embodiment. The laws of cause and effect working in these vast metamorphoses are moral in nature, traditionally known under the name of Karma. Through these studies the Ego of Man is revealed as an entity amongst others in the spiritual world accessible to the extended intuitive consciousness. But it is in this physical world and no other that we can develop the concepts with which to understand the

immensely dynamic realities which are revealed to the consciousness of those who, like Steiner, have developed the faculties to observe them and to translate their observations into our customary language. This last is perhaps one of the greatest difficulties. Man is now revealed as living in vast breathing rhythms between the spiritual world—the world of wholes, of real beings and interweaving continuity—and this our present world of diversity, separateness, rigidity and death. But it is exactly to this world that we owe the possibility of freedom and understanding.

The future development of the spiritual elements or faculties of our being depends on the exercise of that free activity which we can nurture as the child of the scientific revolution. It depends entirely on ourselves whether we exercise this activity or not, but the possibility has been achieved. To the higher spiritual elements, awaiting our free activity to bring about their awakening and development, Steiner gave the names of Spirit Self, Life Spirit and Spirit Man. These are the higher metamorphoses of the astral, etheric and physical bodies respectively, and correspond to the ancient Indian terms Manas, Buddhi and Atma.

We have now reached as far as on this occasion is possible. For those unfamiliar with the enormous work of Rudolf Steiner I hope that I have made a preliminary approach to it which they may feel able to follow up; those familiar with it will already know how difficult these questions are and will, I hope, be tolerant towards my shortcomings.

## Bibliography

GEORGE ADAMS AND OLIVE WHICHER

*The Living Plant—The Science of Physical and Ethereal Space*; Goethean Science Foundation 1949.

*The Plant between Sun and Earth*; Rudolf Steiner Press.

OWEN BARFIELD

'Historical perspectives in the development of Science' contribution to Volume I of *A new image of Man in Medicine*; Futura Publishing Co. New York 1979.

*What Coleridge Thought*; Wesleyan University Press Connecticut 1971.

KARL KONIG

'Einige Geisteswissenschaftliche Betrachtungen über die Eihüllen und die erste Anlage des Menschenkeimes' Monatschr. 'Natura' I 1927.

'Versuch einer Darstellung der jüngsten menschlichen Embryonalentwicklung' 'Gäa Sophia' Jahrb. II Band 1927.

'Embryology and world evolution' The British Homeopathic Journal Vol. LVII Nos. 1, 2, 3 & 4 Vol. LVIII Nos. 1 & 2.

ERNST LEHRS

*Man or Matter*; Faber and Faber London 1958.

HERMANN POPPELBAUM

*Man and Animal*; Anthroposophical Publishing Co. London 1960

*Man's Eternal Biography*; Adonis Press New York 1945.

RUDOLF STEINER

*Theosophy*; Rudolf Steiner Publishing Co. London 1932.

*The Case for Anthroposophy*—Selections from *Von Seelenrätseln* Introduction and translation by Owen Barfield; Rudolf Steiner Press London 1970.

*Truth and Knowledge*; Rudolf Steiner Publications 1981.

*Knowledge of the higher worlds*; Rudolf Steiner Publishing Co. 1937.

JEAN M. G. TWENTYMAN

*The Organic Vision of Hélian Jaworski*; New Atlantis Foundation Lecture 1971.



M



ПБ19 2224



300174233

СОВИС

Published by  
New Atlantis Foundation  
1 Dymocks Manor  
East End Lane  
Ditchling · Sussex  
1983

Printed by  
Ditchling Press Ltd, South Street, Ditchling, Sussex