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Preface

Bernard J. Garber

This cycle of eighteen lectures, given in Paris between May 25 and June 14, 1906, presented a survey of the evolution of cosmos, Earth, and humanity, to the extent attained by Dr. Steiner in the maturing process of his research. In his Autobiography, when looking back to the earlier years, he says of the stage that his knowledge had then attained: “The whole world outside of human beings is a riddle, the real world riddle; and humanity itself is the answer.” Through the years, we worked continuously at the solution of the riddle. These lectures of 1906 were also devoted to this theme, and three years later he was able to present the knowledge gained in a comprehensive form as his book An Outline of Esoteric Science.*

This quote, from The Life and Work of Rudolf Steiner by Guenther Wachsmuth, sets the tone for the notes of these eighteen lectures, originally written by Edouard Schuré in French, and eventually published in French in 1928. They constitute the only known record of this cycle of lectures, for which we are most grateful to Schuré for having performed this remarkable task. The first translation into English was published in Anthroposophy: A Quarterly Review of Spiritual Science (vols. 3 and 4, 1928 and 1929). Lecture sixteen, “Earthquakes, Volcanoes, and the Human Will,”

was not published in the quarterly at the time. René Querido translated this lecture into English from the French, and also furnished the diagram following the lecture.

There were some interesting circumstances surrounding the original presentation of this cycle of lectures in Paris, most of which are historical in the development of spiritual science in Europe at that time. One can investigate them by reading that section in the Wachsmuth biography of Steiner, or in Steiner’s *Autobiography.* But most important for the future of spiritual science and art was that, at this place and time in Paris in 1906, Steiner and Schuré met for the first time in this present life, which led to such important activities for both of them in advancing the life of the spirit in humankind in both spiritual science and art. Further details on all of the above can be found in the book *The East in the Light of the West and The Children of Lucifer: A Drama,* by both Steiner and Schuré.

In chapter 69 of his *Autobiography,* Steiner includes his own recollections of the events that took place at the time. This chapter is among the very last of Steiner’s writings (he died on March 30, 1925), the significance of which cannot be ignored, considering the context of the chapter as a whole and the remarks included in it. Here it is:

> Anthroposophic knowledge was conveyed to the society, in a form that can in part be seen from the privately printed material. Meanwhile, Marie von Sivers and I, through our joint efforts, developed more specifically the artistic element, which indeed was destined to become an *enlivening power* within the anthroposophic movement. There was recitation oriented toward the art of drama, which had to be cultivated so that the anthroposophic movement could receive the right content. Also, during my journeys in the

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service of Anthroposophy, I was able to study the development of architecture, sculpture, and painting.

In this description of my life I have often spoken of the importance of art to one who consciously experiences the spiritual world.

Previously, and as I began my anthroposophic work, most of my opportunities involved studying only the reproductions of art created in the course of human evolution. My only access to the original works of art had been in Vienna, Berlin, and a few places within Germany. But now, because Marie von Sivers and I had to travel in connection with anthroposophic work, the treasures in museums all over Europe came within my reach. Consequently, from the beginning of the century—in the fifth decade of my life—I went through a higher training in art and, related to that, my perception of the spiritual development of humanity.

Marie von Sivers was always my helpful companion; with her fine and tasteful participation in all I was privileged to experience in the realm of culture and art, she shared in and supplemented those experiences in a very beautiful way. She understood how all these artistic experiences flow into Anthroposophy to enliven and mobilize its ideas and concepts. The impressions I received through art permeated what I effected in lectures.

The practice of viewing the great masterpieces presented our souls with a world from which yet another soul configuration speaks to the present age across time. We could immerse our souls in the spiritual nature of art that still speaks from Cimabue. Through art we could go deeply into the fierce spiritual battle of Thomas Aquinas against Arabism* at the height of Scholasticism.**

* Arabism (Steiner’s term) refers to a seed for the West’s inevitable turn toward materialism, whose origin is in ancient Egypt.

** Philosophical views of the Middle Ages based on teachings of the Latin Fathers and Aristotle, whose leading proponent was Thomas Aquinas.
Being able to observe the development of architecture was especially significant to me. While contemplating the forms of styles, seeds for the forms in the Goetheanum began to grow in my soul.

I believe that I have reason to show special gratitude to a destiny that allowed me to stand in Milan during my mature years—for the first time—and see Leonardo’s _Last Supper_. I was also able to see the works of Raphael and Michelangelo in Rome and to discuss those experiences with Marie von Sivers. If I were to describe even briefly all of those experiences, the book I would have to write would not be small. One is led deeply into the secrets of human evolution when contemplating with the background of spiritual insight such works of art as the _School of Athens_ or the _Disputa_.

And, if one follows the advance in art from Cimabue through Giotto to Raphael, one sees an ancient vision of spirit gradually fading, to be replaced by modern naturalism. This principle of human evolution, which I knew through spiritual perception, manifests clearly in the development of art.

It was always very satisfying to me whenever I saw how the anthroposophic movement was given new life through its constant permeation with art. Flexible thinking is needed to comprehend spirit being in ideas and express this through thought. Such mobility comes from filling the soul with art.

Furthermore, the society had to be protected from an invasion of inner untruths related to false sentimentality. There is always the danger of such invasion in a spiritual movement. But the inner untruthfulness of sentimentality is cast from listeners when a lecture is enlivened by mobile ideas gained through living in the artistic element. Although sustained by sentiment and feeling, when absolute clarity is sought in the pursuit of art, it can be the most effective balance to false sentimentality.
In this sense, I feel that the anthroposophic movement is particularly fortunate that Marie von Sivers was destined to become my collaborator. Her very disposition gave her the knowledge to cultivate with full understanding this element of art, sustained by feeling yet unsentimental. This inwardly untruthful sentimentality had to be countered continually. It penetrates a spiritual movement again and again. One cannot simply dismiss or ignore it. The very people who are the first to encounter this difficulty are often spiritual seekers in the depth of their souls. At first, however, it is difficult for them to gain a firm relationship to knowledge of the spirit world. Unconsciously, they seek a kind of numbness in sentimentality. They wish for an especially esoteric knowledge. Such knowledge leads them to an urge to form exclusive, sectarian groups.

It is important to make truth the sole directing force of the whole society. Thus, those who deviate in one direction or another would always see the example of those who rightfully consider themselves the central bearers of the movement, since they, after all, initiated the movement. Marie von Sivers and I considered it essential to work in a positive way for Anthroposophy rather than to fight deviations. Nevertheless, instances did occur, of course, when opposition became necessary.

For me, the period before my course of lectures in Paris was most of all a time when an inner process of development formed a unity of soul. I held those lectures during the 1906 Theosophical Congress. Some who attended the conference had stated their desire to hear the lectures in addition to what had been arranged. In Paris, Marie von Sivers and I met Edouard Schuré for the first time. She had translated his works and corresponded with him for some time. Schuré was one of those who attended the lectures. I also had the frequent pleasure of seeing Merejkovski, Minski, and other Russian writers in the audience.
During that lecture course, I presented the central spiritual insights into the human being that I felt had “matured” in me. This feeling that knowledge is “mature” is essential in spiritual research. Before this feeling can come about, one must experience spiritual perception as it arises in the soul. Initially, the perception is experienced in dim, undefined contours. It must be allowed to sink back into the depths of the soul to mature. Consciousness has not progressed far enough to comprehend the spirit in what one perceives. The deeper area of the soul must join this content, undisturbed by consciousness, in the spirit world.

In conventional science, a factor of knowledge is not asserted until all necessary observations and experiments have been completed and the relevant calculations proven absolutely correct. In the science of spirit, methodical conscientiousness and discipline are not in any way less necessary. Somewhat different paths are followed, however. Consciousness must be tested in relationship to discerning truth. One must be able to patiently wait with perseverance and inner conscientiousness until that consciousness has passed the test. Its capacity for ideation within a certain realm must become strong enough to bring such spiritual perception to comprehension.

In the Paris lecture series, I presented the meaning of a spiritual perception that had gradually “matured” over a long period of time within me. I explained the general relationship among the aspects of the human being—the physical and etheric organizations as the media for manifesting life; the astral body as the medium for manifesting feeling and volition; and the vehicle of the “I.” Then I added that the etheric body of a man is feminine and that a woman’s etheric body is masculine. Thus, Anthroposophy illuminated a fundamental question of existence that was often discussed at the time. One need only call to
mind the book *Gender and Character* by the unfortunate Weininger or the poetry of that period.

The problem was consequently revealed to be part of the deepest aspects of the human being. The human physical body is introduced very differently into the forces of the cosmos than the human etheric body. In the physical body, human beings exist within Earth’s forces; in the etheric body they are linked with the forces of the supra-earthly cosmos. The masculine and feminine aspects lead to the cosmic mysteries.

This knowledge was one of my most heart-stirring, soul experiences. Again and again it made me aware of how to approach a spiritual perception with patience, and how, the moment one experiences the “maturity of consciousness,” one must seize a spiritual perception with concepts so that it may be transmitted into the realm of human knowledge.
In May 1906, Rudolf Steiner came to Paris with a number of students to give a series of private lectures to a small circle of friends. I myself had never seen him and did not even know of his existence, but I had begun correspondence on the subject of one of my dramas (The Children of Lucifer) with his friend Mademoiselle von Sivers, who later became his wife and his most understanding colleague. She brought her teacher to my house one happy morning.

I shall never forget the extraordinary impression made upon me by this man when he entered the room. As I looked at that thin, powerful face, at the black mysterious eyes flashing light as if from unfathomable depths, it struck me that for the first time in my life I was facing one of those supreme seers who have direct vision of the great beyond. Intuitively and poetically, I had described such seers in The Great Initiates, but I had never hoped to meet one in this world. The impression was instantaneous and irresistible, unexpected as well as already known. Even before he opened his lips, an inner voice said to me: Here is a true master, one who will play an all-important part in your life.

Our subsequent relations would prove that this first impression was not an illusion. The program of the daily lectures, of which the speaker told me in advance, aroused my keenest interest. The lectures would cover the whole field of his philosophy, although it was possible to develop only
certain outstanding points. One would have said that the teacher’s purpose was to offer a vista of the general plan from its own heights. His fervent, convincing eloquence, irradiated by invariable clarity of thought, struck me at once as possessing two outstanding and unusual qualities.

First was its artistic power. When Rudolf Steiner spoke of the phenomena and beings of the invisible world, he seemed at home. With striking details and in familiar terms he told of events in these unknown realms, just as though he were speaking of the most ordinary matters. He did not describe but actually saw and made others see the objects, scenes, and cosmic vistas in clear-cut reality. Listening to him, one could not doubt the power of his astral vision; it was as limpid as physical vision, but much more penetrating.

Another characteristic, equally remarkable was that this philosopher and mystic, this thinker and clairvoyant, connected all experiences of soul to the immutable laws of physical nature. Those laws were used to explain and classify the suprasensory phenomena that appear before the seer, initially, in an overwhelming variety and almost bewildering abundance. Then, by a wonderful counter-stroke, these subtle, fluidic phenomena, proceeding from cosmic powers grouped in a great hierarchy, began to illumine the edifice of material nature. The diverse parts of nature were linked together, related to these cosmic powers from the heights to the depths, from the depths to the heights, and a vista of the grand architecture of the universe opened up from the inner world, where the visible is forever coming to birth from the womb of the invisible.

I took no notes of the first lecture, but it made such a vivid impression upon me that, once I reached home, I felt a need to write it down without forgetting a single link in the chain of these illuminating thoughts. I had absorbed the lecture so completely that I found no difficulty at all. By a process of involuntary and instantaneous transmutation, the German words, which had ingrained themselves in my memory,
changed into French. The same thing, repeated after each of the eighteen lectures, gradually grew into a dossier that I keep as a rich and rare store of treasure. These lectures, which were never transcribed or revised by Rudolf Steiner, do not exist in the archives of his public lectures or in the collection of lectures duplicated for members of the Anthroposophical Society. They are, therefore, entirely unedited. A number of members of the French Group of the Society have expressed the desire to publish them as a book, and Made­moiselle Rihouet, the editor of La Science Spirituelle, kindly offered the pages of that magazine. I respond all the more readily to this desire, because these priceless lectures mark a significant phase of Rudolf Steiner’s thought: the spontaneous burst of his genius and its first crystallization. Moreover, it gives me joy to pay this new tribute to that teacher to whom I owe one of the great revelations of my life.

1. The Origin of Esoteric Christianity

These lectures offer a kind of summary of what Rudolf Steiner calls Anthroposophy. In this foreword, I do not pretend to give anything like a resumé of this vast, all­embracing philosophy. Its principles are contained in a theogony, cosmogony, and psychology, complete in themselves. It lays the foundation of a moral philosophy, an art of education, a science of aesthetics. The teaching of this thinker and seer extends into all and every area of life. His sweeping vision embraces the whole history of humanity and imbues modern science with spiritual concepts, without even a hair’s breadth distortion from its exactitude and pristine clarity. My only purpose here is to point out the most strikingly new chapters, for they lead us again to the very roots of this sublime thought.

At the time he was delivering these lectures, Rudolf Steiner was still the General Secretary for Germany of the Theosoph­ical Society, whose headquarters is in Madras. The society, originally founded by H. P. Blavatsky, has Mrs. Annie Besant
as its present president. Despite the many gaps and ultimate digressions, this theoretical system of Eastern thought—which originated in India and derived its name *Theosophy* from Alexandrian tradition—served to recall for the uninitiated West the two fundamental tenets of all esoteric tradition: 1) The plurality of progressive lives of the human soul under the law of karma, and 2) ascending human evolution under the influence of spiritual powers. When Rudolf Steiner entered the Theosophical Society (which he had chosen as his initial field of activity), he had already mastered fully the doctrine he owed to his own initiation. These lectures, given in the year 1906, are proof of this fact. 

The essential difference between Indian Theosophy and Anthroposophy lies in the supreme role that Anthroposophy attributes to the Christ in human evolution, as well as its connection with Rosicrucian tradition. This appears clearly in the first two lectures, entitled: “The Birth of the Intellect and the Mission of Christianity” and “The Mission of Manicheism.” More clearly than any other esotericist, Rudolf Steiner saw the profound change that has come about through the ages in the human constitution of body and soul and in the human means of perceiving truth. In ancient, pre-Christian times, human beings were endowed universally with a faculty of “atavistic” clairvoyance. During the Atlantean period, human beings lived more in the “world beyond” than in this world. Clairvoyance was the outstanding faculty and the chief mode of human cognition, but perception of higher worlds was confused and chaotic. That faculty weakened and gradually faded in the course of evolution; reason and the mere observation of nature came to the forefront. The yoga of the Indian *rishis* (the source of Aryan mythology and religion) represents an effective endeavor to regain the lost power of clairvoyance and, at the same time, to regulate it according to cosmic laws. But

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shortly before the coming of Christ, humanity had reached the
last stage of descent into matter and passed through a perilous
crisis. The passions emanating from the animal stage, beyond
which human beings had now passed, threatened to engulf
them. Civilization itself was in peril. The human psyche—
having freed herself from primitive darkness through long
struggle—was threatened by the decadence of Greece and the
orgies of Rome.*

2. **Jesus Christ as the Axis of Human
Evolution: The Rosicrucian initiation**

This lecture deals with the dangers that necessitated the
Incarnation of the “Word that was in the beginning,” the
divine Logos who became a human being. The mission of
Jesus Christ had been foretold long before in the sanctuar­
ies of India, Persia, and Chaldea, proclaimed in the vision of
the risen Osiris and of the “Sun at Midnight” in the crypts
of ancient Egypt. The human race had reached such a degree
of materialisation that salvation was made possible only by
a manifestation of the Divine Spirit on the physical plane.
And so the Light that, until then, had not descended further
than the Moon, this “Light of grace and truth,” came down
into the darkness of the lower earthly realms, to incarnate
in the man Jesus of Nazareth to become the axis of human
evolution.

A grand revolution, a change of incalculable significance,
occurred in the inner planes—one destined to transform the
whole world. The result was a complete change in human
mentality, the two poles of which were, in a sense, reversed.
A separation took place between these two outstanding fac­
ulties: sensibility and intelligence, intuition and reason. Until
this time, intuitive sight had dominated, and reason had played

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* For more on this and following references to cosmic and human
evolution, see Rudolf Steiner, *An Outline of Esoteric Science*, Hudson,
a secondary role; science had remained the docile servant of religion. Primordial wisdom had been a combination of the two. The conquest and mastery of the material world had become the goal of humanity. Reason gained the upper hand, and instinctive feeling would henceforth live its life apart. On the one side was the triumph of reason in Aristotelian thought, and on the other religious feeling reached a climax in contemplation of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Science and religion became two separate powers and then, shortly thereafter, rivals and mortal enemies. In religion, the Cross of Christ was sufficient for salvation. By contrast, science soon proclaimed that only it possesses reality, which has passed through the sieve of physical observation and syllogism; hence the dualism that has divided and torn apart human consciousness for the past two millennia. The advantage of this has been the development—to the extreme—of the two poles of the soul, the two dominating faculties of intelligence.

In our time, however, pure reason has driven intuition from science and insight from education, and our materialistic civilization has reached such a condition of anarchy that its very existence is threatened. From the outset, the aim of Christian esotericism was to heal that dualism, to cultivate ideas capable of reconciling the two enemy powers of religion and science, of intuition and reason, the combined knowledge and operation of which alone can reach truth and ensure the healthy development of humankind.

Esoteric tradition has always been characterized by two fundamental principles: First, the plurality of progressive soul existences and second, knowledge of the origin of evil and the means whereby humankind may become its victor. All great teachers of esoteric doctrine have enjoined their pupils to go along two paths of initiation simultaneously to guarantee reaching truth. The path of mysticism, or ecstatic contemplation of the spiritual world, and the path of rationalism, synthetic contemplation of the visible universe in the light of archetypal ideas that arise from the spiritual hierarchies but
are attainable by human intelligence through intuition, even when direct clairvoyance is not present. It seems that everyone will be deeply interested in reading the notes of Rudolf Steiner’s seventh lecture (“Esotericism and the Gospel of St. John”), in which he describes how the Rosicrucians worked to unite themselves with the Christ by meditating the first fourteen verses in the Gospel of St. John. In successive visions, the Rosicrucians relived the seven stages of Calvary, from the scourging and crowning with thorns, the bearing of the Cross to the mystic Death and ineffable Resurrection. Bathed in an ocean of love, they heard the resounding Logos, the “Word that was in the beginning,” radiating the spiritual Light that pervades the whole universe and is the creator of souls. The cosmic meaning attached to these stations of the Cross is deeply moving and provocative of thought.*

3. The Interior of the Earth and the Problem of Evil

Rather than lingering on the Rosicrucian initiation that reveals the axis of Christianity and carries us into the realms of the world invisible, let me point specifically to lecture 16, the novelty of which is no less striking. Rudolf Steiner gives us a striking example of his way of contemplating visible nature as a means of penetrating her essential being. It is as though matter became translucent, and suddenly the hidden spirit was revealed. The highly suggestive title of this lecture is “Earthquakes, Volcanoes, and the Human Will.” The special significance is that its main theme is related to the very roots of human nature.

The mystery of the Earth’s interior, the basis and stage of human evolution, is one of the numerous problems that

materialistic science has never been able to solve. Unceasing research has not helped. Many scholars imagine the Earth’s interior as an igneous mass, capable of bursting the crust of the Earth; others imagine it as a compact mass of mineral substance, which explains neither volcanos nor earthquakes. The Earth is a living being, as are the planets and suns, endowed with an interior organism indispensable to its functions and its role in the Cosmos. Steiner sees the Earth’s constitution in the form of nine layers—or, rather, as nine layers embedded one within the other.

The eight interior layers under the Earth’s crust represent, as it were, the physiological organs of our planet from which its life emanates and upon which this life depends. The substance of these eight inner spheres does not resemble the mineral matter that forms the outer crust and, in a sense, the skin of the Earth. The elements composing these layers are half liquid and half gaseous. The fire principle—the air-fire, mobile and pregnant with life, as well as a reservoir of will impulses and the cause of volcanic eruptions—is only one of the spheres embedded one within the other. It is the fourth from the center, or the fifth from the outer mineral crust. The interior fire communicates with the crust along paths that are veritably “ventilating tracts,” hence the volcanic eruptions on the surface of the Earth.*

If we glance momentarily at the interior constitution of the Earth, one fact strikes us immediately—it makes up the forces concentrated in the planet and worked at its development through successive metamorphoses, from the nebula of Saturn through the Old Sun and Old Moon periods and on to its present state. These same forces have worked at the human structure and today are more active than ever. 1) Egoism and black magic constitute the opaque center of the Earth, because egoism—love of self for its own sake, which black magic exaggerates and takes to excess—is indispensable to

the development of human individuality. The fatal products of egoism are hatred and strife, represented by the next two layers: 2) division and 3) the prism, in which individualities multiply and differentiate in order to battle with one another.

It may be said that these three layers represent the Earth’s kernel as it existed in the nebula of the Saturn period. This foundation is indispensable to all of the Earth’s subsequent evolution. It is the springboard from which individuality can rise to higher worlds, as long as egoism (the principle of evil) is conquered and transformed by the higher forces arising from the Sun and the firmament—forces of which divinity is the wellspring, and true human freedom the sculptor.

The period during which the Earth was still united with the Moon is indicated within the Earth by the existence of three other elementary spheres: 4) the Fire principle is at the root of will impulses and the cause of volcanic eruptions when a path is forged to Earth’s mineral crust. 5) Above this is the level of organic plant life. Again, 6) there is a still higher level of the vortex of animal forces, where the ethereal embryos of the living beings destined to crawl, walk, and fly germinate and attain life in a laboratory of ceaseless activity.

In this second trinity of forces that constitute Earth’s interior, we find the remains of the period when Earth was still united with the Moon. In those times, the Earth’s surface was a kind of porous substance, the home of hybrid beings, half vegetable and half mollusc, with giant tentacles, while the seeds of terrestrial flora and fauna floated in the semi-liquid, semi-vaporous atmosphere. Wonderful words in the book of Genesis refer to this period: “Darkness was upon the face of the deep and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the Waters.”

The third trio of inner organs of the Earth represents its actual form. The final metamorphosis occurs at the time of separation of the Moon from Earth; it is indicated by the addition of two new elements that are, as it were, the “humanized” replica of the Earth’s center: 7) Consciousness inverted, in
which everything is transformed into its opposite; 8) *Negative life*, or *death*. Every living being descending into this realm must perish instantly; it is the *Styx* of the Greeks, cursed by the Gods of life and beauty. 9) Above the sphere of death stretches the *solid mineral* envelope of the Earth, the theater of humanity.

It must be admitted that this extraordinary description of the interior constitution of our planet cannot be verified by any means of observation adopted by natural science. None but a seer possessed of equal power could contradict or confirm it. Alternatively, it is certainly impossible to deny that this scheme of the Earth’s constitution opens up amazing vistas of human evolution. Clairvoyance itself bears a unique power of persuasion, and its truth may, to a degree, be demonstrated by effects that reveal themselves in human beings. The parallels between the cosmic fire and human passions, their close relationship, mutual action, and reaction, shed much light on the origin of evil. Many historians have stated that the great crises in history (wars, revolutions, and social upheavals) are nearly always accompanied and followed by earthly cataclysms (earthquakes or volcanic eruptions). Human passions magnetically affect the Earth’s interior fire, and this fire, when released from its chains, feeds human passions. Thus fire, which is destined to generate life, begets evil through human volition.

Nevertheless, the Earth, having as its kernel the egoism that is indispensable to the development of individuality, is the solid, immutable foundation upon which the soul can find support to soar into spirit worlds that shelter and shape her through the power of the solar Logos. Evil becomes a leaven of evolution, finally to be conquered by goodness. Those who have won through to freedom hold the balance between destiny and providence from the moment they are able to chose between good and evil. Yearning for the Divine begets enthusiasm. By their own efforts, they can draw near to the sublime truth ruling the universe. Thus Satan-Ahriman—the demon
of negation and hatred—is laid low by the genius of infinite love radiating in the Logos, the Christ. And Lucifer, the spirit of intelligence and beauty, released from his sojourn in the lower world of matter, is on the point of taking flight to his star. Yet Ahriman, Lucifer’s dire companion, is held in check by the Christ but works to break his chains so that Lucifer’s flight may be prevented.

Anthroposophy is the most potent means in our present era to restore the severed harmony between the worlds of matter and spirit, between science and religion. It is also the agent for reestablishing peace in social affairs.

In truth the hour is serious. Humanity has never faced such a great danger. The forces of evil are mobilized, but not those of goodness. This is proven by the unprecedented ravages of Bolshevism, the relentless application of destructive materialism. A gathering of all the spiritual forces available to humanity will be needed to combat this scourge. But a wide and high ideal is necessary. Human beings would gladly know where feet are taking them in this world and in the one beyond. They need a sublime goal in the one, and the beginnings of actual realization of the other. “Evil can be conquered only by a high ideal” says Rudolf Steiner. “Those without an ideal are weak and powerless. In a person’s life, ideals play the role of steam in an engine; they are the driving force.”

The knowledge gained by Rudolf Steiner during his life and his apostolate of a quarter of a century is scattered throughout his writings and numerous lecture courses, most of which have been recorded. The special interest attached to these lectures of 1906 is that they show the genius of this thinker-seer at the beginning of his career and the zenith of his inspiration, at the very moment when his all-embracing thought was coming into its own, fully armed. Those who read these notes may catch, here and there, an echo of the power of the master’s
living words. A striking example of this impressed itself upon me during a lecture he once gave: “The thoughts of the Gods are not as human thoughts. Human thoughts are images; the thoughts of the gods are living beings.”

Revelations like this flash out into the Infinite. They are an echo from far away of the Word creative invoked by St. John at the beginning of his Gospel. Their vibrations thrill through us like the Sound Primordial whence shines the light—the Sound whose harmonies bring worlds to birth.
AN ESOTERIC COSMOLOGY
I

THE BIRTH OF THE INTELLECT & THE MISSION OF CHRISTIANITY

It is only in recent times that the truths of esotericism have been the subject of public lectures. Formerly, these truths were revealed only in secret societies to those who had passed through certain degrees of initiation and had sworn a lifetime of obedience to the laws of the order. Today, humanity is entering a very critical period. Esoteric truths are beginning to be disclosed to the public, and in twenty years or so, some of them will have become common knowledge. Why is this? The reason is that humanity is entering a new phase, which this lecture will attempt to explain.

During the Middle Ages, esoteric truths were known within the Rosicrucian movement, but they were misunderstood or distorted whenever they were allowed to leak out. During the eighteenth century, they entered a phase of much superficiality and pretense and, with the beginning of the nineteenth century, the physical sciences relegated them to the background entirely. Only today are they beginning to reemerge, and in the coming centuries they will play an important role in the development of humankind. To understand this, we must look at the centuries preceding the advent of Christianity and follow the progress that has been made.

It does not require very profound knowledge to realize the difference between people of pre-Christian times and people today. Although scientific knowledge was far less, the people of ancient times had deeper feelings and intuitions. They lived more in the world beyond—which they also perceived—than
they did in the sensory world. Some had direct, actual communication with the astral and spirit world. During the Middle Ages, when earthly existence was certainly not comfortable, human beings still lived with their head in the heavens. Of course, mediaeval cities were somewhat primitive, but they were a far more accurate representation of the inner human world than are today’s cities. In addition to the cathedrals, houses and porches and their symbols also reminded people of their faith, their inner feelings, their aspirations, and their soul’s home. Today, we know about a great many things, and the relationships among human beings have multiplied ad infinitum. Nonetheless, we live in cities that resemble deafening factories and awful Babels, while nothing reminds us of our inner world. We commune with that inner world not through contemplation but through books. We have passed from intuition into intellectualism.

To discover the origin of this stream of intellectualism, we must go back further than the Middle Ages. The period during which the human intellect was born—when this transformation took place—occurred about a thousand years before the Christian era, during the times of Thales, Pythagoras, and the Buddha. It was the time when philosophy and science first arose, and truth was presented to human reason in the form of logic. Before that age, truth presented itself as religion, and revelation was received by the teachers and accepted by the masses. In our time, truth passes into the individual intelligence and likes to be proved through argument; it prefers to have its wings clipped.

What took place in the inner nature of human beings to justify this transition of consciousness from one level to another—from the plane of intuition to that of logic? Here we encounter a fundamental law of history, one no longer recognized by contemporary thought. It is this: Humanity evolves in a way that enables the different elements and principles of the human being to unfold and develop in successive stages. What are these principles?
First, human beings have a physical body in common with the mineral kingdom. The whole mineral world can be rediscovered in the chemistry of the body. Human beings have an ether body, which, properly speaking, is the vital principle within. We have this ether body in common with plants. This principle engenders the process of nutrition and the forces of growth and reproduction. Human beings also have an astral body, in which feelings and sentiments and the ability to enjoy and suffer are fired up. We have the astral body in common with animals.

Finally, there is a human principle that cannot be spoken of as a “body.” It is the innermost human essence, distinguishing us from all other entities, mineral, plant, and animal. It is the self, the soul, the divine spark. The Hindus spoke of it as manas, and the Rosicrucians as the inexpressible. Essentially, a body is only a part or fragment of another body, whereas the self, or human “I,” exists in and of itself—“I am I.” This principle is addressed by others as “you.” It cannot be confused with anything else in the universe. Because of this inexpressible, incommunicable self, human beings rise above all creatures of the Earth, above the animals, and, in fact, above all creation. Only through this principle can we commune with the “infinite self,” God. This is why, at certain specific times, the officiating hierophant in the ancient Hebrew sanctuaries said to the High Priest, “Shem Hammeophorash,” meaning: What is his name (the name of God)? “Heh-Vau-Heh, or, in a word, Jev, or Joph, meaning God, nature, human—or, again, the inexpressible human “I,” which is both human and divine. These principles of the

* Steiner uses these Theosophical terms: manas, a duality of a higher manas (the spiritual, inner, or higher “I”) and a lower manas (the ordinary mind that tends to join itself to the Kama, or desire); budhi, or spirit soul, the vehicle of pure universal spirit; and atma, or spirit, one with the Absolute, as its emination.

** Also transliterated as the four-syllable tetragram: “Yod-Heh-Vau-Heh,” or “YHVH.”
human being were laid down in remote ages of a vast evolutionary cycle—but they develop very slowly, one by one.

The special mission of the period that began about a thousand years before the Christian was to develop the human “I” in the intellectual sense. Above the intellectual plane, however, is the plane of spirit. In the coming centuries, human beings will attain the world of spirit; humankind will find its way from this point on. The seeds of such future development have been cast into the world by the Christ and by true Christianity.

Before discussing the world of spirit, we must understand one of the forces that allowed all humanity to pass from the astral to the intellectual level. This occurred through a new kind of marriage. In ancient times, marriages were made within a tribe or clan, which was simply an extension of the family. Indeed, sometimes brothers and sisters married. Later on, men looked for wives outside the clan or tribe, the civic community. The beloved became the stranger, the unknown. Love, which had been merely a natural and social function, now became personal desire, and marriage became a matter of free choice. This is indicated in certain Greek myths such as the rape of Helen and in the Scandinavian and Germanic myths of Sigurd and Gudrun. Love becomes an adventure, the woman a conquest from afar.

This change from patriarchal marriage to free marriage corresponds to the new development of human intellectual faculties, or the “I.” There is a temporary eclipse of the astral faculties of vision and the power of reading directly in the astral and spiritual world—faculties included in ordinary speech under the term inspiration.

Now let us consider Christianity. Certainly, it features human fellowship and the cult of one God, but these are only the external and social aspect, not the inner, spiritual reality. The new, mysterious, and transcendental element in Christianity is its creation of divine love, the power that transforms human beings from within and the leaven through which the
whole world is raised. Christ came to say, “If you leave not mother, wife and your own body, you cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). This does not imply a cessation of natural links. Love extends beyond the bounds of family to all human beings and is changed into vivifying, creative, transformative power. Such love was the fundamental principle of Rosicrucian thought, but it was never understood by the outer world. It is destined to change the very essence of all religion, all cults, and all science.

Humanity progresses from unconscious spirituality (pre-Christian), through intellectualism (the present age), to conscious spirituality, whereby the astral and intellectual faculties reunite and become dynamic through the power of the spirit of love, both divine and human. In this sense, theology will tend to become theosophy.

What, essentially, is theology? It is knowledge of God imposed from without as dogma as a kind of supernatural logic. What is theosophy? It is knowledge of God that blossoms like a flower in the depths of the individual soul. God, having vanished from the world, is reborn in the depths of the human heart.

In the Rosicrucian sense, Christianity is both the highest development of individual freedom and universal religion. There is a community of free souls. The tyranny of dogma is replaced by the radiance of divine wisdom, embracing intelligence, love, and action.

The science that arises from this cannot be measured in terms of its power of abstract reasoning, but through its power to bring souls to flower and fruition. That is the difference between Logia and Sophia, between science and divine wisdom, between theology and theosophy.

In this sense, Christ is at the center of the esoteric evolution of the West. Certain modern theologians (mostly in Germany) have tried to represent Christ as a simple and naïve human being. This is a grave error. The most sublime consciousness, the most profound wisdom, lives in him, as well
as the most divine love. Without such consciousness, how could he be a supreme manifestation in the life of our whole planetary evolution? What gave him this power to rise so high above his own time? What is the source of transcendent qualities?
The purpose of this lecture is to expand and deepen what was said in the preceding lecture.

The difference between esoteric brotherhoods before and after Christianity is that before the advent of Christianity their main mission was to guard the sacred tradition; after the advent of Christianity the purpose was to form and shape the future. Esoteric science is not abstract and dead but active and alive.

Christian esotericism is derived from the Manicheans, whose founder, Mani, lived on the Earth three hundred years after Jesus Christ. The essence of Manichean teaching relates to the doctrine of good and evil. In ordinary thought, good and evil are two irreducible qualities, one of which, goodness, must destroy the other, evil. To Manicheans, however, evil is integral to the cosmos and collaborates in its evolution, and it will eventually be absorbed and transfigured by goodness. The great feature of Manicheism is that it investigates the function of evil and suffering in the world. *

To understand the development of humanity, it must be viewed in its entirety; only in this way will we see its high ideal. The belief that an ideal is unnecessary for action is a serious error. Those without ideals lack power. The function of an ideal in life is similar to steam in an engine. Steam in a small space comprises a vast expanse of “condensed space,” hence its tremendous power of expansion. The magic power

of thought is similar. Let us, therefore, rise to the thought of humanity’s ideal as a whole, guided by the thread of its evolution through the epochs of time.

Systems like that of Darwin also look for this guiding thread. The grandeur of Darwinian thought is not disputed, but it does not explain the integral evolution of humanity. It sees only the lower, inferior elements. So it is with all purely physical explanations that do not recognize the spiritual essence of the human being. Theories of evolution based entirely on physical facts, attribute an animal origin to humankind because science has established that the brow is lacking in fossilized human beings. Esotericism sees something very different, knowing that the physical human being simply expresses the etheric human being. At the present time, the human ether body has virtually the same form as the physical body, though it extends a little beyond it. The farther back we go in history, however, the greater the difference in size between the etheric head and the physical head; the etheric head is found to be much larger. This was especially true in the period of earthly development that precedes our own. Those alive then were Atlanteans. Geologists are, in fact, beginning to discover traces of ancient Atlantis and traces of the minerals and flora of the ancient continent now submerged under the ocean that bears its name. Traces of human beings have not yet been discovered, but this is just a matter of time. Esoteric prophecies have always preceded authentic history.

The frontal part of the human head began to develop in the European races that followed those of Atlantis. The focal point of consciousness in Atlanteans was outside the brow, in the etheric head. Today it is within the physical head, a little higher than the nose.

*Nifelheim,* or *Nebelheim* (“land of mists”), in Germanic mythology is the country of the Atlanteans. During that age, the Earth was hotter and still enveloped in vaporous clouds. The continent of Atlantis was destroyed by a series of deluges, with the result that the terrestrial atmosphere cleared. Then,
and only then, came blue skies, storms, rain, the rainbow. That is why the Bible says that, when Noah’s Ark came to rest, the rainbow, the “bow in the cloud,” was a new token of alliance between God and humankind.

The “I” of the Ayran race could not be realized consciously until the ether body was centralized in the physical brain. Until then, human beings could not say “I.” Atlanteans referred to themselves in the third person.

Darwinism has made many errors in regard to the differentiation expressed by the races existing on Earth. The higher races have not descended from the lower races; on the contrary, the latter represent the degeneration of the higher races that preceded them. Suppose there are two brothers, one of whom is handsome and intelligent, the other ugly and dull. Both proceed from the same father. What should we think of those who believed that the intelligent brother descends from the idiot? This is the kind of error Darwinism makes in regard to the races. Human and animal have a common origin; animals represent a degeneration of a single common ancestor, whose higher development is expressed in the human being. This should be a source of pride, since the higher races have been able to develop only because of the lower kingdoms.

Christ washes the feet of the Apostles. This is a symbol of the humility of the initiate in face of inferiors. Initiates owe their existence to those who are not initiated. Hence the deep humility of those who truly know in face of those who do not. The tragic aspect of cosmic evolution is that one class of beings must lower themselves so that the other may rise. In this sense, we can appreciate the beauty of Paracelsus’ words: “I have observed all beings—stones, plants, animals—and they seem to me nothing but scattered letters, humankind being the word, living and whole.”

Animals are crystallized passions. In the course of human and animal evolution the inferior descends from the superior. The contradictions in human beings, the way the elements mingle in us, constitute one’s karma, or destiny. Just as
humankind has wrested itself from the animal, likewise humankind will wrest itself from evil. But never before has humanity passed through a crisis as severe as that of the present age.

Evil and goodness remain within human beings; similarly, in the past animals were within humankind. The aim of Manicheism is to sublimate human beings to become redeemers.

The Master must be the servant of all.

True morality flows from an understanding of the great laws of the universe.