

The Lectures of Rudolf Steiner

Dr. Steiner's Struggles with Slander and Backlash Against His Work

GA 174b

Preface

This lecture was translated using the [DeepL](#) and [Google](#) translators and [dict.cc](#), an online English-German dictionary. Much care has been taken to ensure as much accuracy as possible. I translated each paragraph independent of the surrounding content and made 1-1 comparisons of each translator. Where the translation in each output was questionable, I broke the paragraph down into sentences and sometimes phrases or single words.

Where certain phrases or sentences could not be resolved to clarity by the above means, I took liberties through my experience with Dr. Steiner's lectures and books i.e. his translated works to contemplate what he meant to say and made appropriate edits or insertions. These I have demarcated [in brackets]. Where I could not comfortably resolve a question of the translated phrase, I left it 'as is.'

The title of this lecture is my own.

In this lecture, Dr. Steiner discusses how certain of his private conversations with individuals led to abuse, even slander, by those individuals. As a result, he removed his firm request to keep anything he says private. The following is quoted from the volume in which the lecture below was translated (GA 174b).

-anthony

Rudolf Steiner originally did not want the numerous free lectures and courses held between 1900 and 1924, both publicly and for members of the Theosophical and later Anthroposophical Society, to be recorded in writing, since he intended them to be "oral, not to be printed messages." However, after increasingly incomplete and incorrect listener transcripts were being prepared and distributed, he felt compelled to regulate the transcription. He entrusted Marie Steiner-von Sivers with this task. She was responsible for appointing the stenographers, managing the transcripts and reviewing the texts necessary for publication. Since Rudolf Steiner was only able to correct the transcripts himself in very few cases due to lack of time, his reservations about all lecture publications must be taken into account: "It will just have to be accepted that there are errors in the originals that I have not checked."

In his autobiography "My Life" (Chapter 35), Rudolf Steiner expressed his views on the relationship between the members' lectures, which were initially only accessible as internal manuscript prints, and his public writings. The relevant text is

reproduced at the end of this volume. What was said there also applies to the courses in individual specialist areas, which are aimed at a limited group of participants who are familiar with the basics of spiritual science.

Stuttgart, 11 May 1917

It is my intention, while I am here, to talk to you about things that can make present-day events a little more understandable to the searching human mind. These things should not be discussed in an external way, but something should be pointed out, through which man can gain an understanding of our present time in a spiritual expansion, so to speak. We want to carry out this intention, which I have had for a long time for this visit to Stuttgart. The lecture next Sunday is still available to us.

I would like to say that, like waves of our time — I say this with great care — many things play into our movement from the outside, and it seems to me first of all necessary to put forward a few principles in a kind of introduction that may be suitable to dispel some misunderstandings about Anthroposophy, which can only too easily arise in our time, which hates the depth of thought and feeling, which on the other hand, can be suitable for establishing a correct relationship within ourselves to what Anthroposophy can be for us.

Let's try to put the question to ourselves properly: What are we looking for when we choose the path into the anthroposophical movement? — On this path we seek to gain the possibility of finding a relationship to the spiritual world that corresponds to the needs for this spiritual world that are born in us out of the forces, out of the living conditions of the present. No one comes to us, if he is not superficial, who can gain a relationship to the spiritual world in a more feasible way than with us. No one comes to us who can establish a relationship with the spiritual world on those paths that have been fully recognized outside for centuries and which owe their viability to the fact that people forgot to think about the justification of what has become part of the general necessities of life. On the other hand, there is much discussion about justification when something has to appear first in the world, so to speak. We cannot often enough keep in mind what Anthroposophy should and wants to be in the spirit of our time and connect it with that within us that can push for Anthroposophy, that wants to bring us to Anthroposophy.

You see, my dear friends, Anthroposophy would not exist if there were just one or two people who find it sympathetic to agitate for such ideas as they live in Anthroposophy — well, let's use the official expression. Anthroposophy springs entirely from the knowledge that there are souls searching in our time who can only find what they are looking for on the path of Anthroposophy. Anthroposophy is not pursued because anyone wants Anthroposophy, but because such souls long for Anthroposophy. The fact that some people deny this does not speak against this, for there is much that lives in the subconscious and unconscious which, if correctly interpreted, represents nothing other than the longing for Anthroposophy. The longing above all — if we single out one thing from this Anthroposophy — the longing to recognize the greatest impulse of the earth's development, the Christ-Impulse, in the way that is appropriate to the needs of the present, to find the way to the Christ-Impulse in the way that the heart must long for it if it really wants to understand itself within the conditions of life in the present. Now such general, abstract statements as I have just expressed are certainly enlightening for anyone who has been on the ground of anthroposophy for years. But what is at stake is this: to really permeate one's soul with the spirit of these words in such a way that these words do not remain in us merely abstractly, not merely theoretically, but that they become the content of our whole life, above all the content of our attitude.

I have probably already told an example here that is particularly characteristic: I once gave a lecture in a southern German city on the subject of "Bible and Wisdom," in which I tried to explain how even the positive Christian person, especially if he understands himself correctly, can find the way to anthroposophy by describing how anthroposophy, through its presuppositions, can penetrate more deeply into the great mysteries of the original book of humanity, the Bible, which can never be exhausted. After the lecture, I was approached by two Catholic priests who had participated in the lecture. And from what they said it was clear that they could not really determine any particular objection to their Christian doctrine, as they understood it, as they knew it as theologians — perhaps not so much as priests who were committed to certain things, but as theologians. So they took a side path and said: "Yes, you see, there is nothing special to say from our point of view against what you have just said today, except this: When we speak, we speak in such a way that everyone can understand what we say. However, you also talk about Christianity, but only for those who have reached a certain level of education or have prepared themselves especially for this type."

I replied: "Yes, you see, Reverend, it doesn't matter what you or I think about the question of what should be said to all people, because that leads the whole subject down the path of personal opinion. It is not at all particularly wonderful that everyone believes that what they do is of universally valid. Why should one be surprised about it; otherwise he would not do it! But it doesn't matter what you or I think is right. Our way of researching about the spirit only begins with the fact that we rise above this personal opinion, and take the reality, the true reality into consideration. In our case, this reality is very close. It lies simply in the answer to the question: Today, do all the people for whom you believe you speak — you believe you speak for all people — still come to you in church? The question answers a fact — the question whether you think that you speak for all people. That this should apply to all people, that corresponds only to your opinion; the other corresponds only to a fact. Tell me if all people go to church!" — They could not answer me anything else than that a number of people do not go to church. That refutes you, I said, because then you do not speak for those who do not go to church. And among them there are many people to whom I have to speak, and who also have the right to find the way to Christ in the present.

That means not basing one's judgment on what one personally believes to be true or false, but subjecting one's judgment to the demands and tasks of reality. However, it is much easier to theorize about what is right or wrong than to study reality in detail, always listening with an attentive ear to what reality demands of us. Anthroposophy does not want to be anything other than providing answers to questions that it does not ask itself, but which hearts and souls ask in the present, if they understand each other correctly. And I am aware: the questions that are asked in my writings, which are already very numerous, were not asked by me. The answers are often given by me, but the questions are not asked by me. The questions are asked precisely by what contemporary culture produces, what, for example, natural science produces in contemporary culture, which everyone who is interested in the demands of the time and who, above all, is serious about the most important needs, must ask of the souls of the present.

If one recalls these premises to some extent before the soul, then it shows itself to us as true that a basic intention prevails in all the anthroposophical literature before you, a basic view, a basic tendency and a basic attitude. If one goes through all these writings, not with the benevolent attitude which we may have gained within our circle, but with the critical view which one can gain precisely from the present culture of the times, then one will find one thing as the central point of all this anthroposophical literature. That is that everything is aimed at bringing to the human soul that which this human soul must demand above all in the present: Independence, power of judgment out of one's own inner being. I have often had to resist the urge from this or that side to write popularly. I have always resisted this urge for the simple reason that it cannot be a question of giving people articles of faith within anthroposophical literature, which they can accept, if they wish, in a lightly

abbreviated understanding, but because it can only be a question in this literature of calling up one's own power of judgment, one's own soul-searching. This prevails, as anyone who wants to can convince himself, within this whole anthroposophical literature.

Nowhere is it intended to invoke blind faith. Certainly, things are told that cannot be verified without further ado, but they are told as facts of the spiritual world, which everyone can accept as information and against which he can apply his critical standard further and further, if he so chooses. And we have seen that in recent times friends who are understanding of the matter have managed to approach even the most subtle things with the probe of unprejudiced criticism to a high degree. What is contained in the anthroposophical literature referred to here need never shy away from this unprejudiced criticism. It will pass this unprejudiced criticism; it will pass it all the better, the more unprejudiced this criticism is. Never will anyone hear anything else from me, when it comes to this question, than this: Examine, examine, examine, but do not remain with examining, but seek to examine things above all by trying to get deeper and deeper into things using the means of contemporary thinking. — Because this is the goal, the writings of this literature can make people independent.

Of course, one experiences quite a few things when one surveys the way in which Anthroposophy is received. I met people again and again who listened to one or the other lecture, read one or the other small writing and then never showed up again. That is their right, of course, nobody should be reproached for that. And when they were then asked by an acquaintance why they hadn't turned up again — in all friendship, of course, not with some kind of reproach — they answered: Yes, if we go into the matter in more detail, we fear to be convinced. — This is certainly an important statement, but it also points to important facts. What is being attempted is precisely this: to get rid of the hereditary evil of our time, the establishment of personal opinions, the establishment of personal theories, and to direct the souls to that which the spirituality of the world itself says, if we find the possibility to devote ourselves to this spirituality of the world with the whole soul and to speak of the methods, to speak of the means by which the soul reaches, as it were, to listen to the spirituality of the world itself.

A world view that emerges in this way from the deepest needs of the time, but which so fundamentally contradicts what people believe today, well, such a world view will only slowly and gradually find its way into people's souls. People's souls cling to what they are used to, people's souls like it best when they hear their own water clarity from the pulpit and can say to themselves from what they hear: I've thought that for a long time. The anthroposophical teachings of the present day are not such truths that have been "thought for a long time." But in the eyes of many people that is the main mistake, that they can't say to themselves: I've been thinking that for a long time, and that they don't want to say to themselves: If I dig really deep inside myself, then nothing is expressed there which is a personal opinion, but which is connected precisely with the development factors of mankind. — During my stay in Stuttgart this time we will come back to many such factors in the development of mankind. So it is understandable that all sorts of obstacles and hindrances arise when people try to approach Anthroposophy, Spiritual Science.

My book "How to attain knowledge of the higher worlds?" is much read in the course of time, not only within those who belong to the various circles of the Anthroposophical Society, but in the present time it is also much read outside. When reading this book in particular, the same experience happens again and again which is extraordinarily characteristic. Here or there someone reads the book "How to attain knowledge of the higher worlds?" and writes me a letter about it. And, of course, I am always pleased when someone writes me an intelligent letter about any book or anything else, but especially about the book "How to gain knowledge of the higher worlds". But the usual thing is that the letter that is written is the clearest proof, the very clearest proof that the person concerned

has not understood the book. In general, the most important aspects of the book have been transposed into the most materialistic mind of the present time. The thing on which people mostly bite when they come to this book is the following.

But let me state something in advance: A whole sum of doubts can come up to the one who reads the book "How to gain knowledge of the higher worlds", and there are many people who can testify to the fact that I am always ready to talk to people about these doubts. Therefore I do not want what I say now to appear as if it is meant to deter anybody from writing such a letter. They should not be deterred from writing such a letter, but very often a letter is written by people biting at a particular thing, where immediately the thing appears to them in the materialistic. There is much said in the book "How to gain knowledge of the higher worlds?" which, if observed correctly, leads man to find the way into the spiritual world from within himself, from his soul. This very book is designed to make man as independent as possible, not to impose anything on him on any subjective way, but only to clear away the obstacles so that he can find the truth himself.

The best way to assimilate this book would be to acquire its contents through inner action — [meditative contemplation]. But [so often] people latch on to the sentence: 'The one who has reached the necessary maturity will find his spiritual teacher, if he only searches correctly.' — [They say to themselves,] 'So, there we have it! I write a letter to the one who wrote the book, and he becomes my spiritual teacher; that is the simplest thing!' — There we have the translation into the materialistic. That this passage could be the most sacred impulse for a person searching for independence, to search further, to find the way, which could perhaps consist in something completely different than writing a letter to someone: 'You, give me instructions' -, that is just uncomfortable for very many readers of the book. They do not search enough in the book. And so this book "How to gain knowledge of the higher worlds?", although it is perhaps one of the most read books in the German world and has even been translated into many foreign languages, is one of the books that is most misunderstood. And it is nevertheless very easy to understand, if one only lets it work on himself without prejudice and does not translate it into the materialistically comfortable.

To a certain extent, people today are also looking here for what they are used to looking for in other areas. People today are much imbued with the habit of not helping themselves, that is, of not learning how to help themselves in one situation or another, but of letting themselves be helped and not worrying about the principles according to which they are helped. What is the use of worrying much today about the way to live in the best way in terms of health? One has it prescribed by someone who is there for it, and then one does not need to check according to which principles he prescribes; one hands over one's fate to the one who is set up as an authority. Why should one not have the urge to hand over one's destiny to someone else, especially on the spiritual path, on the path that is most important for human beings? Because the very work by which one is stimulated to do so is the one that most of all makes it its task to make the human soul independent!

It may be said that scientific research has reached a certain level today, and this level of scientific research would be accessible to those who are appointed today to represent the scientific disciplines, if most of them would not simply get caught up in their discipline and not go beyond the limits of their discipline. If only, I will say, a dozen of the official representatives — and only these are heard today — would pull themselves together with the utmost honesty and then examine what emerges from this scientific state of affairs, what is in my "Occult Science an Outline", [and] in my "Theosophy", then you would find everything confirmed from that side, [that] which can be characterized by saying: Look at life, whether life does not confirm that which can be experienced through spiritual science, which is sought here out of the spiritual world! — Whoever really masters natural science today [can] come to the authentication of that which anthroposophically oriented spiritual science gives.

This is absolutely true. But we are faced with the peculiar fact that precisely those who could undertake such an examination absolutely do not care about it, have not cared about it up to now, that no one has even raised these questions — apart from those who have received the suggestion for it from our circles — that no one has set himself the task of really testing the spiritual-scientific results of Anthroposophy against the, but fully understood, natural-scientific research of the present! Spiritual-scientific research need not be in the least afraid of this test, it will pass it. It is only to be put to it, it will be passed. But, of course, in an age when one is not even inclined to delve into the most primitive truths, this test may be a long time coming.

The urge not only to be logical, but to be realistic, that is, to form one's judgment not only according to abstract logic, but by immersion in reality, is an urge that few have in our time. To be logical, that is what many strive for, but only a certain going behind the logic makes it possible to see the scope of the logic itself, otherwise one does not even notice what confusion one can make just with such very concordant judgments. You see, to always agree with one's own judgment, or to agree with the judgment of another, is certainly logical, but it can lead to quite strange collisions. Charles V the Austrian (King of Germany) and the French King Francis I came to the same thought. They were, so to speak, in complete agreement with regard to a certain idea which they wanted to realize. Francis said: "My dear brother wants exactly the same thing as I do. We both want exactly the same thing." — They both wanted to conquer Milan! (and waged war over it in the Italian War of 1521–1526) Yes, you see, that's where you notice it — namely when you say the postscript. But few people in the present day have the inclination to even think about the fact that such judgments buzz around a great deal and dominate contemporary thinking, to the detriment of the present.

It is strange how — pardon the philistine metaphor — enlightened minds sometimes bridle discernment by the tail today, as if one bridled a horse by the tail instead of at the head. But such a bridle is immediately accepted if the person concerned is officially authorized. Anyone who has a sense for what is alive in thinking, feeling and willing has been able to endure true torment for many years with the whole way and formation of some thinking in the present. I can still remember listening to my first lecture in Vienna on the theory of elliptic functions — pardon the word, but it depends on the spirit of what I want to express, and not on the fact that one or the other understands what I am now referring to. So I attended lectures by the then already famous Professor Leo Königsberger. He was so famous that when he was appointed professor, he could immediately write to the government that he wanted to be appointed court councilor, not just professor. So when I heard the first lecture from him, he came up with the question: What about the numbers?

People assume positive and negative numbers. Positive numbers correspond to the money I have, negative numbers to the money I don't have that I owe. But there are other numbers. Now mathematicians use a line in the middle of which they write a 0 to denote the positive and negative numbers: plus 1, plus 2; minus 1, minus 2. And then the famous Gauss added a new number line so that you can fill the plane with different types of numbers. I don't want to talk about the justification of this plane of numbers, but Leo Königsberger began his lecture on elliptic functions by saying: Today it could be that someone would say that one could just as well assume numbers perpendicular to this plane. — When I, as a very young badger of sixteen or seventeen, got to know the story of the number plane, I already raised an objection: I said that then one could also imagine the space filled with numbers. — The teacher kindly reassured me by saying: Well, let's wait until the next centuries! — which of course made a big impression on me, the young badger. Now I heard Leo Königsberger discuss the same question in Vienna. He said: Suppose there were these three kinds of numbers, not just the numbers that lie in the plane of the two lines, but the numbers that lie in the third dimension.

We hypothetically assume such numbers exist, and I would multiply such a number by another number. Now I will show you that if you multiply them, the product can be zero under certain circumstances. But since that can never be, there can be no such number. — Now, you see, to listen to such a thing is torture. I don't want to speak now about whether the whole story is correct or not, but if one assumes the one, not to assume the other, but to make the assertion: because the product is zero, there can be no such number — to listen to such a thing, that is a torture, because of course the right thing is this, that if one has two numbers which give zero, one must assume that then zero can arise by multiplication, not the reverse; that is the obvious thing. But whether these judgments live in mathematics, whether these judgments live in political notes, for example in the notes of Mr. Wilson, they always lead back to the same thought forms. But if these forms of judgment live in those judgments which want to be effective for the fate of mankind, then an error in judgment means something quite different from an error in a merely limited scientific speculation, as it is in many respects the teaching of Leo Königsberger.

It is necessary to point out how it belongs to the characteristic of our present time that people do not want to adapt themselves to reality with their judgment. They do not want to live in reality because they do not want to live in the simplest things. In the simplest things they want to presuppose what is dear to them, not what results from reality. The fact that in many respects one must learn to think differently in order to get out of some of the miseries of the present, that one must learn not merely to think about everything, but to think differently, is of tremendous importance. If people with their old habits of thought could understand anthroposophically oriented spiritual science so well, then they would be able to settle more quickly into the spiritual-scientific truths. But these truths should not be grasped with the old habits of thought, but must be grasped with the new way of thinking, and this is something that people find so very difficult to accept.

These are some of the reasons why it is so difficult at the present time to get anthroposophically oriented spiritual science understood, simply because it has come up against the most obvious prejudices. But precisely because this is the case, spiritual science is not actually being fought, because fighting spiritual science, it must be confessed, stands on very weak feet. Go and look for those scientific discussions which try to treat spiritual science as it exists in a serious way and in detail, go and look for treatises or the like of this caliber! Whoever has ever dealt with it will see how little there is in this direction. But it may not be at all convenient to go forward in this way. For you see, a few years ago a student who was about to take his doctorate as a philosopher at a very famous university told me: he wanted to write a dissertation which had been advised to him by a famous professor. This dissertation was to be about the great Russian thinker Soloviev. At that time, not much more was printed by Soloviev than a few things published by Nina Hoffmann; later, much more came out. I asked the student: Why does the professor advise you to do a dissertation on this Soloviev? — Yes, said the student, the professor doesn't know anything about this philosopher and wants to know something about him. — So this is the best way for the professor to learn: let the student write a dissertation on Soloviev, if the student knows Russian; then you will learn something about him. That's how the doctoral thesis on Soloviev came about. But a lot of doctoral theses are written in the same spirit. In fact, this is often a maxim, how topics for doctoral theses are given. In this way, however, a certain scientific attitude is cultivated, one could say. Of course, the professor in question could have had a way to really get to know Soloviev if he had intended not only to be a professor of philosophy, but also to get to know the philosophy of the present in one of its most outstanding representatives: He would have had to try to study Soloviev himself, as well as he could, even if the least of Soloviev's works is translated, and he does not know Russian himself.

It is an uncomfortable path, but one can say that for many who wanted to form their own opinion about spiritual science, the path of getting to know spiritual science is much less comfortable today. For there is still a difference whether a professor has a dissertation done on Solovyov or whether he

has a dissertation done on spiritual science. It's still halfway possible to pass judgment on Solovyov when the dissertation is finished, because the student is in any case well trained to only give his judgment in the sense in which philosophy is taught. But what should a modern-day professor do with a dissertation on spiritual science, for example? He couldn't do anything with it. He would be absolutely clueless. And of course it is even more uncomfortable not to get to know the matter by way of a dissertation, but rather to study the matter somehow exhaustively yourself.

But all these things are no obstacle for the honest seeker, those striving for truth of the present time; he may just be longing for spiritual science. Many of you know this, my dear friends. But they are an obstacle for most of those who are in ordinary life today to acknowledge this spiritual science, who do anything other than attempt to drill this spiritual science into the ground. It does not come from them, and since it does not come from them, it must be drilled into the ground [by opponents]. In a factual way this cannot be done; the facts already show this today. For those who have tried to approach spiritual science have not, as a rule, become opponents. They have certainly not become blind followers, but neither have they become opponents. There are many such people. But a large part of our contemporaries simply have the personal interest to eradicate spiritual science, to make its life in the present impossible. If they try to do this in an honest way, if they stand on the ground of spiritual science, if they try to put forward what they have to say against what others have to say in the way of honest literary struggle, then there is, of course, nothing at all to be said against it. But one does not want to do that, it is too uncomfortable. It is much more convenient to transfer the whole matter to the personal sphere, not to speak about what is said in spiritual science, but to talk about all sorts of other things. And that, you see, is exactly what is being attempted in our immediate present today and will be attempted more and more in the coming times, and to which I would like to draw your attention. Because this will lead to the fact that numerous dissatisfied people, who again and again become dissatisfied for personal reasons within our society, can easily be made tools for those who want to eliminate anthroposophy from the world, but do not strive for it in the honest way — they would also not reach their goal in the honest way — who do not strive for scientific discussions, but avoid the honest way, and instead strive to attach some scandal to the spiritual-scientific movement and to translate everything into the personal.

Since my time to speak about factual matters has expired, so that no one can say that I am taking up your time for what has to do with society and its interests instead of dealing with the factual questions, I may now add the following: Those people are found in ever greater numbers who prove suitable to be used by the persons thus characterized, and one has the obligation, if one honestly means it with anthroposophically oriented spiritual science, to point out these things more precisely.

There is a man — his name first came before our eyes many years ago — he comes from a small town, and Frau Dr. Steiner one day received a letter from him of the kind that often occurs: 'I feel unhappy in my situation, I would like to improve my situation.' — And one of the letters that had this tone asked what advice should be given to the person concerned: whether he would do better to marry into some house, into some business, or to seek his further way in the world in some other way. Yes, one must seek the truth unvarnished if one wants to get to the bottom of things and if one does not want to face blindly what will happen in the near future. Now the man was made to understand that we cannot concern ourselves with the question of whether he should marry somewhere or not, but since he did not relent, he was also willingly provided with many things that were suitable to meet his needs for spiritual instruction, which he pretended to have. Indulging in such spiritual things as he envisioned, he very soon came to realize that it was not for such a great mind to supply a business in a small town. He longed for larger circles.

Apparently he had saved himself a lot of money and came to Berlin. He thought it was really nice to do spiritual science, but he also felt that he had a special artistic talent, and he now asked society to promote it. It's nice to help people, isn't it. The samples that the person in question gave of his art spoke against all talent, but some learn so much even without talent that it sometimes satisfies the meager demands. And so it came about that the person in question was recommended to various members who could do this or that for him, that he be promoted. But it always turned out that the thing failed because the person in question wanted to practice his art but didn't want to learn anything because he thought he could do more than all the teachers who wanted to help him. And the result was that, because he rejected the advice of every teacher, there was nothing left to do in the end. One had indulgence after indulgence, but could no longer do anything special, because the person concerned did not like anything [that was suggested]. Because of course that was in his eyes such a blatant case of the world misjudging a growing genius! No one else could honestly share this view, and therefore, my dear friends, it was truly not our fault. That is the primary thing, everything else is secondary. And so it was with this man as it is with many. They first seek promotion within our society, and if they don't get this promotion as they see fit, they become opponents.

And then they come up with all sorts of things. They never talk about what's behind things, of course. They come up with all sorts of things that are best refuted once you explain the reasons [behind the issue]. Of course it was of the purest hurt vanity and incompetence in this case. And everything else that was now set up as a fuss was the most foolish invention, the most foolish fantasy. But today, of course, you find the journals that record of these things. Because the person I'm talking about is called Erich Bamler. And if you really get to the bottom of things in such undertakings, then you don't need to accept an essay like that, which usually doesn't say anything at all, because all the individual things don't express [the truth] at all, they just work from completely different things. And one is actually foolish if one seriously wants to refute the unsubstantial. Because that's not what matters at all, but what lies behind it.

Let us take another case: years ago, a man who is not exactly lacking in vanity, after having had all sorts of objections to anthroposophy, came to see Anthroposophy agreeable. I was the very last person who would have just [brought in, accepted] this person. He [brought] himself [in]. Many things became apparent which did not exactly indicate that this person was striving for quite impersonal purposes in our society. You can't ask for that either, so it can't be blamed if you sometimes even accommodate personal goals to some extent. Such personal goals are also occasionally accommodated, because it is precisely in this [way] that one can lead some people to the right thing. And so it came about that at first the person concerned was quite satisfied with us. He actually wrote a paper. I even took the liberty of writing an epilogue to it, and the book was also accepted by our publishing house. He was good with us; we were people who were easy to talk to. Then the person in question had another publication printed, and after this publication had had various fates, which do not concern us now, he offered it again to the Philosophical-Anthroposophical Publishing House. However, it was impossible for the Philosophical-Anthroposophical Publishing House to accept it.

On the first pages of this writing it says that I have only hinted at certain things about the Christ problem, and that the gentleman in question would like to elaborate. I truly do not say this out of offended vanity, although in this case I am accused of it; but the sentence in which I am accused of it is a brazen untruth, for the thing mentioned there did not take place. Without consideration of the fact that I had perhaps reason not to go further, things are then further elaborated in a way that can remind one of another story that has happened, and of which this story is at least a miniature edition. To this other story I must come back to and will do so afterwards briefly. In this writing of the gentleman in question, all sorts of things that I had only said in lectures were communicated simplistically. Frau Dr. Steiner rightly took offense at this and rejected this writing for the publisher.

And the gentleman developed, because this writing was rejected, into an opponent. Now, of course, one cannot say when one writes an essay for a journal: The Anthroposophical Society is fundamentally bad because my writing was rejected by the Philosophical-Anthroposophical Publishing House. That doesn't work! But that would have been the truth!

So, one invents — in spite of the fact that the person concerned has been informed about the matter innumerable times — the fairy tale about the [supposed] contradictions. The person knows very well [what the truth] is with these contradictions, but he writes newspaper articles about them! What is written in these newspaper articles has no meaning at all, because the person concerned has not become an opponent because of this matter. He should have known the matter long ago when he joined. He became an opponent for the reason given. Some doubt that one can put forward the hypothesis that what comes after is also causally determined by what comes before; but it is still striking that the opposition of Mr. Max Seiling followed immediately after the rejection of his work by our publishing house. It goes without saying that one can easily deny such a thing, that one can raise all sorts of objections, but it doesn't really matter what one or the other objects, but what the facts are.

It does indeed remind me of a somewhat more ingenious case; this is only a miniature version of it. The more ingenious case is that a gentleman who used to be in America, but who is a good European, some years ago, summoned by a veteran member, stayed here in Germany and listened to all kinds of lectures, everywhere also trying with great assiduity to get the lectures that had been given for years, demanding them from this or that person. After he had faithfully packed up everything he had copied, he went back to America. He said there that he had been here, that he had acquainted himself with my teaching, but that he could not be satisfied with my teaching, but had to go much deeper, therefore one would find with him many things that were not yet to be found in my books. For when he had dug up everything that could be found in my books, he was called to a master who lives somewhere in the Transylvanian Alps; he then told him many things that he is now incorporating into his book. But all that he incorporated into his book was that which he had eavesdropped on here in the lectures and which he had copied! And then the book was called: "Rosicrucian Worldview". It was published in America and caused a great sensation there: the book, then, which was a combination of what he had heard here from me and what the Master is said to have told him in the Transylvanian Alps. The people did not need to check what was from me, nor could they, because it had been said in part in our more internal lectures. But it was not enough that this now appeared as an English-American written book, but a German bookstore was found, which translated the book and published it as "Weltanschauung der Rosenkreuzer" ("Rosicrucian Worldview"). The editor was Dr. Vollrath.^[1]

These are only some examples of what happens, my dear friends! These things can be looked at, and must be looked at, because these are the means with which one uses on the one hand, what grows on our soil, and how one fights it on the other hand. It may already be said: Perhaps there has never been an attempt to fight against anything with worse means than is now being fought against us, precisely against anthroposophically oriented spiritual science! Therefore you will find it understandable if, following an iron necessity, so to speak, the only means is used which, although it cannot avert the matter, can perhaps bring about some improvement, even if everything combines to make the greatest conceivable difficulties for the personalities connected with the matter. But one thing must be considered: Too much has been said about this matter, but it has always fallen on deaf ears. Therefore, there is nothing left but — in order to serve the cause, to which we all must be devoted in an appropriate manner — to submit to a certain iron necessity. This iron necessity is simply as follows. Suppose spiritual science would appear as literature, existed as literature. It would

then be quite impossible — in theory it is possible, but compared to the concrete facts it would be quite impossible — for all these things to join spiritual science, which have joined, and which will join in truly the worst, most unworthy way.

The Anthroposophical Society is what we have to distinguish from the spiritual-scientific movement, which wants to be a movement of pure knowledge, a contemporary world-view movement. The idea of this Anthroposophical Society is very good [in the mind of this movement], but in practice it develops — not as it seems to me, but as the facts teach — in many cases in such a way that things come up to us every day which show that this is not an exaggeration. Within this Anthroposophical Society, cliques, especially personal interests for and against, develop with a certain ease in the most extensive way. It is difficult to separate personal interests from purely objective [and factual] ones in a society. But think about it, that social activity opens the door to those people who do not want to oppose spiritual science through honest discussion, but who want to bring spiritual science down by means of personal blackmail, through personal slander. Because one can say that: they want to bring down spiritual science.

Years ago I decided to accommodate the various members' requests for face-to-face meetings, to the youngest and oldest members in the widest possible way. Only in the last few years, when things were getting more and more popular, did the old custom sometimes have to be abandoned sporadically; but only sporadically, in exceptions. Despite this, it has often been emphasized that what is available in the literature and in what is said here in the lectures, there is plenty of what the individual needs for his independent development, so that personal consultations could only relate. If you say it from person to person, it will happen again and again that the wildest nonsense — pardon the expression — within the society will be attached to the personal contact of the members with me, and then the outsiders will look for the ways to all sorts of things slander and defamation. By fib I mean that all too often within the circle of society, when people have such a nice-sounding word, they are quite apt to use that nice-sounding word for their own deep gratification. How good it is for some people, for example, when they can say: I have become an esoteric student. — And how well it feels to some people when they can say: Yes, you know, that's something very mysterious, [but] I can't tell you that; I can't tell you anything about that. — Putting oneself in the limelight, giving oneself a certain reputation, that is behind many an expression that is used and which is then often misused in a very malicious way by those on the outside. All these things, which are being used with malicious intent right now, could never have happened if what did not correspond to legitimate wishes and perhaps an equally legitimate accommodation of these wishes, but now in view of what the outside world makes of it, can no longer be sustained, hard as it is for me, my dear friends. Of course, any friendly intercourse can exist in society, but iron necessity compels me to give private audiences. I am particularly sorry because some will say: why should the innocent suffer with the guilty? — But when one is in a society, it is of course a karma of the society, and there is no other way of doing things. Everything that happened in private conversations that were sought is something that simply has to stop in the face of those malicious slanders.

Do not think that I am less sorry for this than you are, but I know that, just as everything I've said about such things has been thrown to the wind, what I've said today would have been thrown to the wind, if measures were not taken which simply force one to become aware of the seriousness of the matter.

It is easy to attach slander to what is said in private conversations with individual members when this slander reaches the point where it is said here or there that this or that member has been hypnotized. Well, my dear friends, with regard to these things I will soon have to take another measure, from which you will see — and I am really speaking out of a simple sense of duty towards our movement — that I am extremely serious about this matter today and now for the sake of the

sanctity of spiritual science. When a movement like this is simply based on the principle of not encroaching on anyone's sphere of liberty, and when that is strictly followed, when everything that encroaches on one's sphere of liberty is strictly rejected, and then you just go berserk with those things, then it's necessary that one day everything that is supposed to grow on our soil will grow in the fullest public light. When things grow in full publicity, the slanderers will lose ground. But there is no other method in the future. Therefore, as far as it is up to me, I will endeavor to ensure that anthroposophically oriented spiritual science takes place more and more in the full public light in the future. She doesn't shy away from the public. And today I expressly declare to you: With regard to those private conversations that have taken place with members over the years, I release everyone from the promise not to speak about the content of the conversation. Anyone can, as far as he himself likes, share what has ever happened in a private conversation with a member. Nothing will be found that would have to shy away from the public eye. Then you won't have to [struggle] with things, which stand approximately on the following ground. I want to give you an example of how one can use these things before the most blatant ignorance and the will to the most blatant ignorance.

Not only Erich Bamber, but also others who fight just as "honestly" as he did, have argued and basically believe that among all sorts of esoteric principles they were also given this one: "Look at everything that surrounds you in the light of necessity, as if it were necessary, as a given necessary destiny." It is good for a time, as long as one feels promoted within society, when one has received such a rule, to say: I am an esoteric student, for I am constantly meditating: "Look at everything around you in the light of necessity." But why was this rule given to precisely those people, why was this rule advised? For the simple reason that the constitution of their souls required it! It was advice that by no means encroached on their freedom, but advice whose scope and esotericism you want to judge when I point out the following to you: Schopenhauer, in his essay on freedom of will, says towards the end of his essay, regarding our behavior concerning the course of the world and destiny: "Everything that happens, from the largest to the smallest, necessarily happens"; and he speaks of the calming effect of realizing the inevitable and necessary. So people have been advised nothing other than what Schopenhauer himself considers a tried and tested means of getting beyond certain mental depressions, certain depressions of the soul.

Well, when speculating on the most blatant ignorance and on the will to the most blatant ignorance, people can of course be told all sorts of beautiful fairy tales: that one has turned green and blue, especially on the legs, by following such principles^[2]. And for those who want to make something esoteric out of everything, of course, these things can be used as slanders. But just when we know that the things that are done in anthroposophically oriented spiritual science are actually demanded by necessary needs, then we will find it understandable that such a measure as the one mentioned above really has to be taken one day; simply for the reason that one sees that the things in question are meant seriously. Don't complain to me, who feels it as hard as you do; complain to those I have clearly pointed out to you, who make it impossible for such a measure to be avoided. It is very difficult for me today to have to refuse private conversations, which many members want, for these fundamental reasons. Of course, I also know that this will again be used as a form of slander against me, but I cannot act according to personal reasons, I have to act according to what is necessary for our movement. That means I have to submit to the principle of being serious about what time and again gives rise on the one hand to fibbing, and on the other hand to slander and calumny on the part of those who do not honestly want to refute spiritual science, but who want to eliminate it from the world in some other way.

Examine much of what has happened and you will find that the causes always come from within society. Society is very seldom attacked, the point of attack is usually me or my immediate environment. Check such things. But by attacking me, it is the case that one wants to attack [the]

spiritual science in me. For it is highly indifferent to one or the other whether here or there some foolish esoteric advice is given; they are given enough [of that] in the world. But what people are not indifferent to is that anthroposophical spiritual science is a cultural factor of our time, and that it wants to have a say. People don't care about that. Angular esoterics, people don't care about them; but not the one who, according to his fate, cannot remain an esoteric. You wouldn't want to meet the corner esoteric if he was sitting in front of fifty people in Berlin and giving them advice. The attacks started only when the books exceeded a certain number. It would be a sin against the spirit of anthroposophically oriented spiritual science to let it perish, if it can perhaps be prevented by the fact that once, perhaps only for a time, some things have to be done without, because the morality of the people of the present turns out the way it has turned out now.

It has often been seen that things are misrepresented; But how things are dealt with in relation to anthroposophically oriented spiritual science, how things are invented that don't even exist and how something completely different from what happened is told, is one of the greatest rarities, even in the history of mankind. And one must have an inclination not only to see the avalanche when it bury the villages below, but one must have an inclination to see the snowball falling from above, for that becomes an avalanche. Certainly I watched for a long time and admonished again and again, but the admonitions were not properly heard or at least not much was made of them. People outside our society accuse me that one of my biggest mistakes — they list bigger ones today, that was a year ago — is that I have blind followers, that I have blind followers who believe in authority. I may well say that when it comes to something where I should have some confidence from the members of society and do one or the other on the basis of that confidence, I usually don't find very many followers. Usually the opposite of what I think happens. That's how it's been all these years. Actually, the opposite of what I thought happened always happened. But you don't notice it, because a special method was followed in many circles: people asked less for my opinion than for their own opinion and then told the people: That's what he said. — I was very far from having said that, but the person concerned would have liked me to have said it; so he said I had said it. It's like this: when it is said in the outside world that I have blind followers, the practice of society shows that the complete opposite is the case, at least in relation to things where I should be met with some trust, because sometimes I have spent years trying to reach a judgment and the other person has not.


All this is really not said in order to grumble or to cry, as they say in Austria, or to clamor in a certain way, but it is said because the symptoms are now showing themselves daily, which indicate that our spiritual movement is to be put to death in the way indicated, and because the tendency must arise to see the snowball at the top, and not only the avalanche when it has arrived at the bottom. Just a few hours before I came here, among other things, a letter was read to me in which once again it is told that two have come together; I do not want to mention any names, so one can simply cite such a case as a case. One of them is accused of hypnotizing the other, of sitting behind the other and meditating into the other's neck^[3], so that the person in question would suffer all kinds of harm in his soul. And the matter is then pursued further. It is only one case, the last one, no, not the last one, there was another one afterwards, but it is the one I read three hours ago. Today it is a harmless thing, in a few years it will no longer need to be: that one person is said to have sat down behind another in order to meditate all kinds of harmful things into his neck and thereby exert influence. That the person in question is as harmless in the matter as possible, there is no doubt. But today, my dear friends, this plays between two members; in a few years it is made into a "Steiner case," which in turn makes quite a nice case for such "studies." Perhaps it will go faster and does not take a few years.

So, understand that there is really an extraordinarily hard necessity for me if I have to resort to what I say on the one hand in the near future: Spiritual science must be attempted to take place in full public view. No one will be neglected in any way, no one will not find what they are looking for,

because everything is happening in full public view. But all the gossip: It's something mysterious, mystical, you mustn't say that, and so on — it should no longer give rise to all sorts of slander. No matter how friendly our intercourse may be, for the foreseeable future it must be no other than friend-to-friend, for private conversations must in principle cease for the foreseeable future. Perhaps this means that our dear members feel compelled, even if it is uncomfortable, to look into things a little more and take care of things that up until now have been given very little attention.




As I said, please forgive me for bringing these things up here today; I brought them up at a time when the actual lecture was already over, but I had to bring them up because they are connected with the life issues of the Anthroposophical Society, of the anthroposophical movement. It is because of this, and not because of unfriendliness, that I have to regret very, very much that I will not be able to have the always willing private conversations with the dear members in the near future. Then that will not be able to develop, really not be able to develop in concrete terms, what is so gladly sought by the malicious enemies. — For, my dear friends, you could of course make an objection, and everyone makes it of his own accord in an understandable way, namely by finding: But with me he could speak. — This is what everyone has said of those who now make their attacks in the most foul manner; and some of those who are now the tools of their protectors have been brought to the Society by very, very respectable members of it. In a certain respect it must become different, but it can become different only through the members.^[4]

Translator's Notes

1.  The person in question here was Max Heindel. I found an in-depth paper written on the issue Dr. Steiner relates to, titled "The Heindel-Steiner Connection." While it is fair in its presentation, it would seem to put slight favor toward Heindel. In my personal view, regardless of the details this document brings to light, Heindel was one of the "worst offenders" of Dr. Steiner's wishes that (1) his spoken lectures not be written down (until later when he had individuals he trusted to exclude any personal bias to transcribe his lectures, as appointed by Marie Steiner) and (2) his urging that what he taught be held within the circle of those who had an understanding of Anthroposophical principles.

It is my view also that, had Heindel been more open with Dr. Steiner with his intent and not been so devious the way he went about his aims, the two could have worked together in an amenable way. I will admit, that early on in my Spiritual Science studies I purchased a first edition of Heindel's "Cosmo Connection" and found it to be an "easy" entrance into what became the much more in-depth and serious work of Dr. Steiner. However, I have not picked up the book since.

I downloaded the "[The Heindel-Steiner Connection](#)" for any that might be interested.

2.  This is presumably an idiom for which I could not determine the meaning of.
3.  I envision this as someone "whispering in the ear" of another. Either way, I believe the image drawn is clear.
4.  In another lecture, of which I don't recall the title or date, I remember Dr. Steiner chiding those in the audience for having left brochures for the lecture on their seats after they left the lecture hall after he had been very specific about them not doing so.

The problems within the "Society" i.e. problems with individuals that Dr. Steiner addresses above would come back to cause a severe rift in the Society after his death:

After the death of Rudolf Steiner in 1925, the anthroposophical society fell into controversy. The most well known fact is the expulsion in 1935 of important anthroposophists of Steiner's closest circle such as Ita Wegman and Elisabeth Vreede by the leadership of the society, then led by Albert Steffen. Also F.W. Zeylmans van Emmichoven was part of the controversy and was excluded, which caused a split with the Dutch division of the society. In later years Marie Steiner was herself excluded from the Executive Council and the further shaping the society, and a legal dispute followed between Marie Steiner (as Rudolf Steiner's legal heir) and the Executive council (dispute was eventually settled in favor of Marie Steiner).

During the last century and up to today, there have been controversy, polarization and polemics in the anthroposophical movement. Focal points are often personalities that give rise to these polarization of opinions (or creation of camps or sides) with their writings, and especially their interpretation and opinions of, and additions to, Rudolf Steiner's work. Sometimes writings are claimed to be the result of own insights and/or clairvoyant research.

Irrespective of taking any position, what is characteristic is that the divided camps blame the other party that these interpretations may go off on a tangent and/or not make sense, and/or dispute or attack the fact that additions by the person are not to be recognized as truthfull or authoritative.

Source: FreeManCreator

At the bottom of that page is a quote by Owen Barfield (1898–1997), from an article written in the Fall of 1987 ("Anthroposophy and the Future"):

In one of the stories in the Arabian Nights – "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," I think – it becomes important to identify one particular room-door in a long row of exactly similar doors. The conspirators, who intend to murder the room's occupant during the night, mark the door with a cross. His wife or lover determines to save him, so what does she do? Since she can't erase the mark, she marks all the other doors in the row with a similar cross. I suspect this is the strategy the Adversary is adopting here, only not with rescue as its object. No longer hostility; no longer the conspiracy of silence. He cannot obliterate the thinking and the revelations of Rudolf Steiner. He can, and I think he intends to, encourage them to sink gently out of sight into a quicksand of amorphous, anti-reductionist impulse. That, it seems to me, is the danger that lies immediately ahead, and I commend it to your close attention.



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