

The Lectures of Rudolf Steiner

The Inner Development of Man

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Recently I have endeavored to sketch the being of man and the three worlds surrounding him, namely, the actual physical world, the soul world and the spirit world. Later on, I plan to speak about the main anthroposophical concepts regarding the origin of man, the earth and the heavenly bodies in general. Thus, the overall outlook on the theory of life as developed by anthroposophy will have been outlined.

Today however, I would like to present a few suggestions on how man's inner development must progress if he desires to reach conclusions of his own concerning the statements proclaimed by an anthroposophical world outlook. It must be kept in mind that there is a great difference between arriving at an understanding of the concepts presented by a spiritual scientist as truth gained through his cognition and experience, and the inner development of the human soul and spirit that enables a person to attain to such cognition and perceptions on his own. One has to distinguish between an elementary level of development leading to comprehension of an experienced spiritual teacher's statements, following them as it were in thought and feeling and acknowledging them as truth within certain limits, and an advanced level on which one attains the personal experiences in soul and spirit realm. This elementary level shall be the subject here. The advanced level concerns actual clairvoyance and to the extent that indications pertaining to such actual clairvoyance can be given at all in public, they will form the topic of a later presentation. The problem of how one may gain personal comprehension of anthroposophical truths shall occupy us today.

Only a few mere hints can be given here since the training that the human soul and spirit must undergo for attainment of the understanding mentioned above is an extensive one. It requires a long period of inner study and the many necessary details involved in such training can certainly not be elaborated upon in the course of a brief lecture. The information that can be related here is but a scant outline of what would be conveyed in personal instructions. Thus it must initially be noted that most people require the aid of a personal teacher in this field. Some might be of the opinion that a person can develop in himself inner abilities, soul forces and spiritual perception by his own attempts, and it might seem unfortunate that in this vital area of life personal guidance is supposedly necessary. The nature of such guidance, however, gives sufficient guaranty that no person comes by any means under any sort of dependence upon another. Nobody evaluates and honors the dignity of man and the respect for the individual more highly than the occult teacher. The instructor of mystical and anthroposophical development never gives anything but advice. Indeed, the greatest teachers in this field never did more than advise and suggest. It is left entirely to the judgment of the individual to what extent, if at all, he intends to follow such advice. It is left up to the individual what task he sets before his soul and spirit; the consideration of human freedom is too pronounced on the part of the teacher to do more than advise and guide. Everything that can be conveyed in any manner in this area must be understood with this reservation.

*In a foreword to the 1918 edition of **Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment**, Rudolf Steiner wrote in regard to the matter of personal instruction: "The statement that the student needs personal instruction should be understood in the sense that this book, itself, is personal instruction. In earlier times, there were reasons for reserving such personal instruction for oral teaching; today we have reached a stage in evolution of humanity in which spiritual scientific knowledge must become far more widely disseminated than formerly. It must be placed within reach of everyone to a quite different extent from what was the case in older times. Hence, the book replaces the former oral instruction ..."*

Another important point is that the main part of this schooling does not express itself in any particular external formalities, nor does it require any definite external measures. This schooling is, rather, a completely intimate development of the human soul, and all the significant degrees of development one must undergo take place in the innermost depth of being. Precisely here a transformation takes place in a person, but nobody, not even his closest friend, need notice anything different. Thus, in privacy, tranquility and seclusion the mystic trains himself to acquire understanding of soul and spirit worlds. It cannot be emphasized enough that nobody devoting himself to inner spiritual development needs to change his everyday occupation in any respect whatever, nor neglect his daily duties in any sense, nor take time away from them. On the contrary, he who is of the opinion that a special amount of time must be spent on his inner training and consequently neglects his ordinary duties and, by his attempts at insight into spiritual worlds, becomes an anti-social, inferior member of human society, will soon discover that by these means least is achieved.

This inner training quietly progresses without undue haste in complete inner tranquility. I must stress at this point that no "extra-special" rules or directions are being given here but rather the descriptions of such a path of inner development. The directions when followed do require one thing of the aspirant without which no higher personal experience can ever be attained. That is endurance. He who has no patience and endurance, who cannot persevere over and over again and follow with complete calm the inner rules that are applicable here, will generally achieve nothing at all. There is one rare exception that allows for success without compliance to these rules. This is the case in which an individual is far advanced on his path of evolution as a human being. The course that the inner training takes is quite different and much shorter in the case of an individual who in a former incarnation had already attained to a certain level of clairvoyance. He who gives the corresponding rules for inner development will soon be aware of this fact and his task will then be only one of eliminating the obstacles blocking the path to enlightenment.

Since the directions for the road to enlightenment vary with each individual, it is as a rule not advisable to seek mystic development without personal guidance. He who sets forth the guide-lines must be closely acquainted with his pupil, not in the ordinary sense of the word but in a spiritual sense. While the occult teacher need not know anything about his pupil's profession, manner of living, family members or experiences, he does need to acquire an intimate knowledge of his soul and spirit conditions and their level of development. It would lead too far today to disclose the ways and means by which the occult teacher acquires this knowledge. They will be discussed in future lectures on clairvoyance.

Inner development is connected with certain definite consequences for those who set out on this path and they must realize that, resultingly, certain definite qualities will appear in their personality. These qualities are symptoms and direct results of the level of inner development and require careful

observation. The occult teacher must know how to interpret these symptoms so as to assure the proper manner of progress of this inner development.

The development of the inner man is birth on a higher level. It is the birth of soul and spirit, not in a figurative, allegorical sense, but as a fact in the literal sense of the word. Even in this area a birth is not without consequences and the occult teacher must know how to deal with them. All this had to be mentioned in advance.

After initial acquaintance with some of the basic teachings of anthroposophy such as reincarnation and karma — the teaching that the human soul has in the past been incarnated repeatedly in a physical body and will continue to return in future incarnations, and the teaching of karma, of compensatory justice — most people will ask how one can comprehend these teachings and how one can acquire an understanding of these on one's own. This is the big question that now confronts each person. There is one golden rule that must be followed that will eventually lead anybody to the desired comprehension. This has been the common experience of all who have earnestly subjected themselves to the exercises in question. There is nobody who cannot in the easiest manner possible acquire this comprehension of reincarnation and karma. One is inclined, however, to say with Goethe, "Though it is easy, the easy is hard." This is so because few are those who resolve to call forth the will-power, endurance and patience necessary for achieving certain definite conditions of soul and spirit essential for this comprehension. The golden rule is this, "Live your life as if reincarnation and karma were truths and they will become truths for you." It appears as if this is to be achieved by a form of self-suggestion but this is not the case. The mystic symbol of the snake that bites its own tail is a familiar one. This symbol has several profound meanings but among the many interpretations it contains is the one expressed here in the golden rule.

It is evident that the supposition inherent in this golden rule negates itself in a sense in like manner as the snake that curls up around itself. How are we to understand this? If reincarnation is a fact, then certain efforts made by man that have an effect on his soul cannot be made in vain, but should become the soul's nature later on. One of the great laws of man that must be intimately tried out on his own self, is expressed in an ancient Indian text, "What you think today you will be tomorrow." He who believes in reincarnation must realize that a quality that he develops within himself, a thought that he imprints in himself by constantly holding it in his mind, becomes something permanent in his soul that will emerge ever again. Therefore, a person seeking mystical development must first of all make the attempt to give up certain formerly held inclinations. Then, new inclinations must be acquired by constantly holding the thought of such inclinations, virtues or characteristics in one's mind. They must be so incorporated into one's being that a person becomes enabled to alter his soul by his own will-power. This must be tried as objectively as a chemical might be tested in an experiment. A person who has never endeavored to change his soul, who has never made the initial decision to develop the qualities of endurance, steadfastness and calm logical thinking, or a person who has such decisions but has given up because he did not succeed in a week, a month, a year or a decade, will never determine anything within himself about these truths.

Such is the intimate path the soul must tread. It must be able to acquire new characteristics, thoughts and inclinations. A person must have the ability to emerge in due time with brand new habits acquired through sheer force of will. A formerly careless person must get accustomed to being neat and exacting and this he must accomplish not through any external pressure but by steadfast resolve of will. It is particularly effective in the case of insignificant characteristics and small matters. The clearer the issues that a person perceives concerning himself, the better his comprehension in the area of truth. If, for example, a person is able to objectively observe a gesture, a facial expression or some other insignificant habit, if he becomes aware of it as if observing another person, and then by sheer will-power puts in the place of the habit or gesture something of his own

choosing, incorporating it into himself, such a person is well on the way to comprehending the great law of reincarnation on his own. A chemist can give descriptions of processes taking place in a laboratory. Similarly, a person can establish directions to be tried on himself. Through insignificant alterations the loftiest heights are indeed reached.

Regarding karma, the great law of just compensation, perception and understanding of it can be gained if one lives one's life as if karma was a fact. If a disaster or a sorrow befall you, try keeping in mind the thought that this sorrow or accident has not occurred by some miraculous chance but that there must be a cause, a reason for it. You need not probe for the cause. Only he who clairvoyantly can command a view of karma would be able to actually perceive the cause of a joyful event, a sorrow or some mishap. You do need a mood, a certain feeling to which you can surrender yourself so that you can sense how a given sorrow or joy must have a cause and, in turn, can cause future events. He who permeates himself with this mood and looks at his life and all that happens to him as if karma was a fact, will find that his existence becomes increasingly comprehensible to him. He who suppresses his anger when something annoying happens to him and thinks instead that just as a stone rolls if pushed so the annoying matter must have come about due to some inevitable set of laws of the universe, attains to comprehension of karma. As certain as it is that you will wake up tomorrow morning, provided circumstances and your health remain unchanged, so it is equally certain that you will comprehend the laws of karma if you view life in this manner.

These are the two prerequisites for a person desirous of spiritual schooling; the aspirant must view life in these ways. He does not, however, have to give himself up to these thought attitudes as if they were the gospel truth. On the contrary, he must leave it open as to whether or not they are really true. He must have neither doubt nor superstition because these two are the worst obstacles. Only a person who views life thus with an open mind is prepared to receive mystical instruction.

Still a third aspect must be considered. No occult teacher will ever instruct a person who is filled with superstition or common prejudice, or one who is prone to senseless judgment or apt to fall prey to any illusion. The golden rule applying here is that, before even taking the first step in the direction of higher learning, a person must free himself from any flighty thinking or possibility to mistake illusion for reality. Above all an aspirant for spiritual enlightenment must be a person of common sense who only devotes himself to disciplined thinking and observations. If a person leans toward prejudice and superstition in the world of sense reality, it soon tends to be corrected by sense reality itself. If, however, a person does not think logically but indulges in fantasies, correction is not so simple. It is essential, therefore, that one have one's thought-life completely in hand and be able to exercise strict control over one's thoughts before ever venturing into soul and spirit worlds. One who easily leans to fantasies, superstitions and illusions is unfit to enter into the schooling prerequisite for spiritual teaching. It would be simple to reiterate that one were free of fantasies, illusion and superstition. But it is easy to deceive oneself here. Freedom from fantasies, illusions, prejudices and superstitions is gained by stern self-discipline. Such freedom is not easily attained by anyone. It must be remembered to what extent most people tend to sloppy, careless thinking and are unable to control their thought-life through their own will-power.

In pondering the demands everyday life makes it becomes clear that it is an impossibility to completely free one's mind from outside impressions. To do so, it becomes necessary, therefore, to set aside a short period of time every day. This short time, which is needed and which must not conflict with one's obligations, is sufficient. Even five minutes or, indeed, even less is enough. For this brief period, a person must be able to tear himself away from all sense impressions, from what flows into him through his eyes, ears and his sense of touch. For this brief duration of time he must become blind and deaf to his outer surroundings. Everything that crowds into us from the outside world unites us with sensuality and the ordinary everyday world. All this must be silenced and total

inner calm must take its place. When this inner silence, this shedding of all sense impressions has occurred, all memory of past sense impressions must in addition be extinguished. It suffices to ponder for a moment how completely we are tied up with matters of time and space, with all that is temporal and mortal. Check the thought that passed through your head a moment ago and see if it is not associated with something of a transitory nature. Such thoughts have no value for inner development.

So all thoughts that connect us with finiteness and transitory matters must be silenced. Then, when such silence has been produced in the soul and for awhile all our surroundings, be they of the era, the nation, the race or the century we live in, are subdued and eliminated, the soul will begin to speak of its own accord. This will not happen immediately. First, the soul must be prepared for this point and there are means and directions that will call forth this inner sounding. Man must give himself up to thoughts, concepts and sentiments that originate not in the temporal but in the eternal. Their content must be true not only for today, yesterday, a century or tomorrow but forever. Such thoughts are found in the various religious books of all people. They are found as an example in the *Bhagavad Gita*, the hymn of human perfection. Too, they are found in the Old and New Testaments, particularly in the *Gospel of St. John* beginning with the thirteenth chapter. Again, effective thoughts are to be found in the first four sentences of the book, *Light on the Path*, by Mabel Collins, familiar to members of the Theosophical and Anthroposophical Movements.

The first four sentences of Light on the Path are: "Before the eyes can see, they must be incapable of tears. Before the ear can hear, it must have lost its sensitiveness. Before the voice can speak in the presence of the Masters it must have lost the power to wound. Before the soul can stand in the presence of the Masters its feet must be washed in the blood of the heart."

These four sentences, which are carved into the inner walls of every temple of initiation, are not dependent on time and space. They belong not to one man, one family. They are not part of one generation or one century, but they extend over the whole of evolution. They were true thousands of years ago and will be true thousands of years hence. They awaken the slumbering soul faculties; let them arise out of the inner realm. Certainly this has to be correctly understood. It is not sufficient to assume that one comprehends the meaning of these sentences. One must allow such sentences to quicken and come to life in one's inner self. One must permit the whole significance of such sentences to radiate in one's inner being, must surrender oneself to it completely. One must learn to love such sentences. If a person believes that he comprehends them, then only has the right moment arrived to let the sentences rise resplendent again and again in himself. The intellectual comprehension is not important; the love for such a spiritual truth is. The more the love for such inner truths streams through us, the more the power of inner sight grows in us. Such sentences must not occupy us one or two days, but weeks, months and years until finally such powers of soul awaken in us. Then at last comes a certain definite moment when still another illumination takes place.

He who proclaims spiritual truths by his own experiences is familiar with this contemplative inner life. The great spiritual truths that he proclaims day by day are part of a vast spiritual world panorama that he can view with the inner power of his soul and spirit. He turns his gaze into soul and spirit realms. He turns his sight away from earth to the solar systems to explore them. This inner power would, however, soon be extinguished if he did not give it new nourishment every new day. This is the secret of the spiritual investigator that the immense panorama of universe and humanity, which he has let pass through his soul hundreds and hundreds of times, must pass through his soul

anew every morning. Again, it is not important here that he comprehends it all but that he learns to love it more and more. Thus he performs a divine worship every morning during which he gazes up in reverence to the great Spirits. He has learned to survey the whole panoramic picture in a few minutes. Thankfulness for what it has given his soul permeates him. Without treading this path of reverence one does not arrive at clarity. It is essential that the spiritual investigator's utterances are formed out of this clarity. Only if this has become the case is he truly appointed to speak about the truths of mysticism, the truths of anthroposophy and spiritual science. In this way does the spiritual investigator function and thus must everybody begin, that is, in the simplest, most elementary manner until he comes to comprehension of these teachings.

Human individuality and that of cosmic beings is profound, unfathomingly profound. One cannot achieve anything in this area save by patience, perseverance and loving devotion toward the cosmic powers. These are forces which, like electricity in the external world, are powerful in the internal world. They are not only moral forces but forces of cognition. When the aspirant for enlightenment has become proficient in allowing such truths to dwell within his being for some time, if he has accepted them in thankfulness toward those who revealed them to him, then he will at last reach a special point, which sooner or later becomes available to everybody who has allowed tranquility and silence to come to fruition in his soul. This is the moment when his soul begins to speak, when his own inner being begins to perceive the great, eternal truths. Then, suddenly the world around him lights up in colors never seen before. Something becomes audible that he had never heard before. The world will radiate in a new light. New sounds and words will become audible. This new light and radiance ray toward him from the soul realm and the new sounds he hears come to him from the spirit realm. It is characteristic of the soul world that one "sees" it. It is equally characteristic of the spirit world that one "hears" it.

If self-development is sought for in this area, then part of it comes about through obedience to and observation of a great sum of rules and directions. Here I could only sketch in sweeping lines how something like this comes about and is experienced. These individual rules must be followed diligently, just like the chemist must weigh and measure with the most delicate instruments the minutest substances needed for a chemical compound. A description of the rules that can be made public will be found in my book, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*. These rules offer specific instructions for treading this path. They, too, require most diligent patience and perseverance.

The rules presented in this book were never made public in former times when, it must be understood, occult instruction was only taught in occult schools. Such instruction is still being given out in occult schools today because it is an intimate teaching process that takes place between two persons. It does no good to seek instruction on one's own initiative by hearing or reading special rules in fragmentary form in one place or another. All the instruction that one can receive from various places, and there are indeed shops advertising such instructions, are no more than tiny fragments torn from the great book of occult schooling. A person who makes use of them must realize that he is leaving himself open to certain dangers. It is not expedient to be introduced to matters that refer to an actual alteration of the soul, that relate to the most profoundly important aspects of soul life, through commercial channels. Occult training methods that are advertised for monetary gain are not only worthless but can be dangerous under certain circumstances. This had to be said because in this present age so much of this sort of thing confronts man. Precisely because so many so-called occult methods crowd the scene today, it has become necessary to present a picture of the truth.

The rules that are put down in the book, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, stem from ancient traditions. Because it is essential that the truth become known, the guiding spirits of evolution have given permission for the publication of these rules. Still, it is only possible to publish a certain amount. The rest had to be excluded because the most important rules can only be disclosed by word of mouth.

What is found in *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment* is apart from other books of instruction in that it is harmless. Only those guide lines are disclosed that cannot do damage to a person, even if they are not followed with patience and perseverance. They can do no harm even if a person practices them improperly. This had to be mentioned because the question has arisen as to why and by what authority a set of esoteric rules was published.

Another point of consideration is that in order to awaken in the soul world, one must have sense organs for this soul world just as one has sense organs for the material world. Like the body, which possesses eyes and ears, the soul and the spirit must possess organs to perceive the radiance of the soul realm and the soundings of the world of spirit. A person with experience in this field, who is clairvoyant, can actually perceive the process of development of such soul organs in a person engaged in inner training. They are perceived in his aura enveloped in a cloud of light. The aura of a spiritually undeveloped person is seen like a nebulous cloud formation. When a person sleeps, the aura hovers above the physical body because the astral body separates in sleep from it. The aura's appearance is that of two entwined spirals like rings of mist. They wind around one another and disappear in continuous spirals into indefinable realms. When a person undertakes occult training, his aura becomes increasingly definable. The indefinable ends of the spirals disappear and the two entwined spiral formations become clearly organized. They become increasingly defined, compact structures. Certain organs appear in the aura that are called chakrams in esoteric language. These are the sense organs of the soul. Their structure is delicate and in order to come into bloom they must be cared for and guarded. Under no other circumstances can they develop. He who rails in this will never enjoy true spiritual perception. A person must suppress all negative sensations and feelings within himself in order to nurture these soul eyes. The chakrams cannot emerge if a person becomes angry at every opportunity. Equanimity must be preserved, patience must be practiced. Anger and fury prohibit the soul eye's appearance; nervousness and haste will not permit its development.

Furthermore, it is necessary that man rid himself of something that is difficult to cast aside in our civilization, namely, the urge to learn "what is new." This has tremendous influence on the soul-organ. If one cannot get hold of a newspaper fast enough and tell the news to somebody else, if a person also cannot keep what he has seen and heard to himself and cannot suppress the desire to pass it on, his soul will never achieve any degree of development. It is also necessary that one acquire a certain definite manner of judging one's fellowmen. It is difficult to attain an uncritical attitude, but understanding must take the place of criticism. It suppresses the advancement of the soul if you confront your fellowman immediately with your own opinion. We must hear the other out first, and this listening is an extraordinarily effective means for the development of the soul eyes. Anybody who reaches a higher level in this direction owes it to having learned to abstain from criticizing and judging everybody and everything. How can we look understandingly into somebody's being? We should not condemn but understand the criminal's personality, understand the criminal and the saint equally well. Empathy for each and everyone is required and this is what is meant with higher, occult "listening." Thus, if a person brings himself with strict self-control to the point of not evaluating his fellowman, or the rest of the world for that matter, according to his personal judgment, opinion and prejudice and instead lets both work on him in silence, he has the chance to gain occult powers. Every moment during which a person becomes determined to refrain from thinking an evil thought about his fellowman is a moment gained.

A wise man can learn from a child. A simple-minded person can consider a wise man's utterances in like manner as a child's babblings, convinced that he is superior to a child and unaware of the practicality of wisdom. Only when he has learned to listen to the stammering of a babe as if it were a revelation, has he created within him power that wells forth from his soul.

Finally, one cannot expect the soul eyes to open immediately. A person who combats rage, anger, curiosity and other negative qualities, is first of all removing hindrances that walled up his soul. Ever and again must this effort be repeated. A clairvoyant person can evaluate to what extent the delicate soul organs are emerging. When human utterances have lost their edge and have become kind and filled with understanding for fellowmen, the spiritual organ located in the vicinity of the larynx is awakened. It takes long practice, however, before a person becomes aware of this himself. It took millions of years for the physical eye to develop in man, from tiny pin-points to early beginnings of a lens to the complicated structure of the eye. The soul eye does not take as long. It requires several months in one, longer in another person. One must have patience. The moment when these delicate soul structures first begin to perceive comes to everybody sooner or later. That is, if a person continues the exercises and particularly if he develops certain virtues, which sometimes the hardships of life itself can develop. There are three virtues in particular that must be developed that nearly turn man into a clairvoyant. Only they must be practiced with the necessary intensity and emphasis. They are: Self-confidence paired with humility, self-control paired with gentleness, and presence of mind coupled with perseverance. There are the great levers of spiritual development.. The three first-mentioned virtues, however, will lead to dreadful vices if they are not each coupled with the three other virtues, humility, gentleness and perseverance.

All this must be taken in the sense of broad outlines. They are examples of the directions that the spiritual pupil must follow on the three levels toward spiritual awakening. The three stages of occult schooling are called preparation or catharsis, enlightenment and initiation. During the first stage or level, man's being is prepared in such a manner as to allow the delicate structures of the soul to emerge. On the level of enlightenment man gains the means of perceiving in the soul realm, and through initiation he attains the faculty of expressing himself in the spirit realm. What I have had to say today might be considered as difficult to understand by some, and though it is really easy, it does hold true here that the easy is difficult.

Everybody can tread the occult path; it is not closed to anybody. The secrets lie in each person's own inner being. Only earnest inner endeavor is required and man must make the attempt to free himself from all the fetters obstructing this inner life. We must realize that the loftiest and grandest truths come to us in the most intimate way. The greatest sages of mankind did not discover the great truths by any other than the path described above. They found these truths because they found the path leading into their inner being and because they knew that patience and perseverance were required in practicing the various exercises.

Thus, when a person reaches down to the depth of his being, when he turns away from the thoughts that assail him from outside and instead arises to the thoughts belonging to eternity, he kindles the flame within himself that will light up the soul worlds for him. When a person develops within himself the qualities of equanimity, inner calm and peace, as well as the other virtues mentioned above, he nourishes this flame with the right sustenance. If a person is able to keep silent and utter only significant, lofty thoughts, if he lives a love-filled existence and his life becomes one of divine worship, all the world around him will begin to "sound." This is what Pythagoras called, "Music of the spheres." This is by no means meant symbolically, it is a reality.

Only mere hints could be given here that point the direction to the path leading to a narrow gate. Everybody can reach this narrow gate and to him who is not afraid of trials and hardships, the gate will be opened. Then he will find what all the great religious and philosophical ideologies have proclaimed: The Eternal One Truth and the Way of Life!

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