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THE EIGHTY-THREE KARMA LECTURES OF 1924: HOW RUDOLF STEINER DEVELOPED THIS CONTENT¹

By Emil Bock



Emil Bock was born in Wuppertal, Germany in 1895. He was one of the founding priests of The Christian Community, a movement for Christian renewal, and he led the movement from 1938 until his death in 1959. He is the author of a series of biblical studies based on the Christology of Rudolf Steiner.

Part One developed the historical background and the themes of the year 1923, leading up to February 16, 1924--the date of the actual first karma lecture in Dornach--which marks the beginning of this Second Part.

*The following was on the blackboard during the lecture (Vol. 1-8 refers to the English editions of *Karmic Relationships*):*

January 25 Bern: The Gate of the Moon and the Gate of the Sun (in Vol. 6) – Variations: Dornach: January 27, Zurich: January 28, Stuttgart: Feb 6 (in Vol. 6)
Feb 16-Mar 23 Dornach: 12 Lectures (Vol. 1)
Mar 29-Apr 5 Prague: 4 Lectures (in Vol. 5)
April 6 Dornach: One Lecture (in Vol. 2)
April 9 Stuttgart: One Lecture (in Vol. 6)
April 12 Dornach: One Lecture (in Vol. 2)
April 16 Bern: One Lecture (in Vol. 4)
Apr 23-May 18 Dornach: 9 Lectures (in Vol. 2)
May 23-May 25 Paris: 3 Lectures (in Vol. 5)
May 29-May 30 Dornach: 2 Lectures (in Vol. 2)
June 1 Stuttgart: One Lecture (in Vol. 6)
June 4 Dornach: Whitsun Lecture
June 7-June 15 Breslau: 9 Lectures (Vol. 7)
June 22-June 29 Dornach: 3 Lectures (in Vol. 2)
July 1-July 13 Dornach: 6 Lectures (in Vol. 3)
July 18-July 20 Arnheim: 3 Lectures (in Vol. 6)
July 28-Aug 8 Dornach: 5 Lectures (in Vol. 3)
Aug 12-Aug 21 Torquay: 3 Lectures (in Vol. 8)
Aug 24-Aug 27 London: 3 Lectures (in Vol. 8)
Sept 5-Sept 23 Dornach: 10 Lectures (Vol. 4)
September 28 Dornach: Last Address

PART TWO

From this important moment onward, Rudolf Steiner remains in Dornach for six weeks. He does not travel elsewhere. The structure of the Society must first be erected to a certain point on the newly created foundation. Week after week, there are class lessons regularly on Friday evenings, karma lectures on

Saturdays and Sundays. Thus, in six weeks, the lectures originate that afterwards will comprise the first volume of karma lectures. Clearly, the intention is a pedagogical sequence proceeding according to plan. The first six lectures contain general points on the laws inherent in the shaping of destiny; for example, how, in the various kingdoms of mineral, plant, animal, and man, cause and effect relate differently to each other. Further, how love in one life forms the karmic basis for joy in the next life; hate, on the other hand, will bring suffering; and how love in a still later incarnation produces joy and an open mind toward the world, whereas hate and suffering are followed by dullness of mind as a third karmic phase.

Then all at once, when the second half of this first group of twelve lectures begins--to the almost shocked surprise of the audience--Rudolf Steiner starts to describe individual historical persons and shows graphically what sort of earlier lives laid the foundation for the present biographies. Individuals such as Friedrich Theodor Vischer, the "Swabian Vischer" who was professor of aesthetics at the Technical Institute in Stuttgart, or the composer and musician Franz Schubert, appear in vivid form. And it is not without significance that right away the first examples thus described are of the kind that point back to earlier incarnations in the world of Arabism. With one stroke, a motif appears that previously had not been mentioned: Arabism emerges. Important representatives of modern cultural life--from the previous century right into the present--are seen as proceeding from Arabism. It could only be experienced at that moment as something immensely daring to hear all this expressed in such concreteness. One wasn't quite sure: what is being done with us? New disclosures follow from one lecture to the next. But Rudolf Steiner not only depicts persons who emerge out of Arabism, he also describes individuals who have come from Christian-Medieval and Greek incarnations. Yet emphasis is laid upon the karmic reappearance of Arabism. And very soon afterwards, the example is given which reappears about ten times in the karma lectures, namely Lord Bacon of Verulam, the great Englishman of the Elizabethan age, the reincarnation of Caliph Harun al Rashid. Here, the advanced Arabian culture of Baghdad of the ninth century A.D. can be seen streaming into modern scientific development. The following lectures show that there are two main paradigms: on one side Aristotle and Alexander, on the other Harun al Rashid and his counselor, who are subsequently reincarnated as Bacon and Comenius. These two pairs represent the two spiritual-historical mainstreams that battle with each other.

After the initial six weeks, the series of karma studies is continued in Dornach, but the group of lectures that eventually will comprise the contents of the second volume is subject to numerous interruptions. For Rudolf Steiner, from now on,

undertakes many journeys in order to carry the impulse of the Christmas Foundation Meeting to other centers, and to ensoul the whole realm of anthroposophical endeavor in East and West with new forces of enthusiasm. Everywhere he travels, he speaks about karma. In the end, there are nine localities where karma lectures are given: Dornach, Stuttgart, Bern, Paris, Prague, Breslau, then Arnheim in Holland, and two different places in England, Torquay and London. This message, in the nature of a bequest, to a certain extent has been spread over the whole of Europe. In addition to this, wherever he gave karma lectures, Rudolf Steiner also spoke about individuals belonging to the history of that particular country. In France he used examples of French, in England of English history. In Prague, he spoke of Amos Comenius, in Switzerland of Conrad Ferdinand Meyer and Pestalozzi. In the springtime, in Dornach, the regular series of karma studies was interrupted by other lectures. To these belong the

significant Easter cycle and the Whitsun lecture of inexhaustible depth--a wonderful karma lecture in itself. The second volume of Dornach lectures begins with concrete examples, as did the second half of the first volume. Up to this point we can still believe that Rudolf Steiner only wants to show us humanity in a new light; we don't as yet realize that he is referring to us. But then he turns matters around, and karma exercises follow in the middle of the second volume. This implies now that in this area an anthroposophist must achieve at least the elementary experiences. It does not suffice only to hear of these matters in lectures or read them in books. We ourselves must penetrate into the depths where destiny reveals its truth. Therefore, a number of lectures demonstrate the kind of exercises through which we can reach a point where physical man becomes transparent for the eternal entelechy incarnated within to shine through.

Of the karma lectures given elsewhere that break into the series of the second volume, and aside from the nine given in Breslau during the agricultural course in Koberwitz, the *three lectures in Paris* stand out. They are explicitly tied to the "French Course." The new kind of reading in the planetary spheres, traversed by man between death and a new birth, is continued. One of the most magnificent descriptions of life between death and new birth thus comes into being. One can read it only with the greatest enthusiasm. An infinite number of insights dawn upon the reader. It is pictured how, after death, man passes through the Moon sphere, then through the Mercury and Venus spheres. Then comes the decisive crossing: entrance into the Sun sphere. In the three lower spheres, the human being has to leave behind everything that cannot endure before the eyes of eternity. In some cases it is very little that man still can bring along when he passes through the portal of the Sun sphere. Now man no longer has the world around himself, he has the cosmos instead within himself. He has grown as large as the cosmos. The spheres are contained within him, as were lungs and liver during life on earth. When, from the Sun sphere, the passage opens to the further spheres of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, after the "midnight-hour of existence," the image of the human form arises as a kind of new external world around the human being. It forms itself from the head: from the realm of Mars, the area of the mouth; from Jupiter, that of the forehead; and from Saturn, the shape of the head as a whole--bearer of future speech, thought, and memory.

To perceive the image of man, the divine model, so to speak--according to which the human being can now build his future body in union with the hierarchies of the heavens--this was possible up until the time of the Mystery of Golgotha, because Christ Himself was still present in the Sun sphere. He helped man to bring to life within his soul the image of man as an orientating, all-encompassing ideal. But at the time of the Mystery of Golgotha, Christ left the Sun sphere and united Himself with the Earth. Henceforth, in his passage through the planetary spheres, the human being depends on having found the connection with the Christ Impulse on earth; and only insofar as he has found it can he behold the image of man after

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death. Only the power of Christ carries him through the upper spheres.

In the karma lectures in Paris, one of the lines of thought of the year 1923 reaches its final and most sublime fulfillment; and now it is also shown how the karma lectures actually deal always with the Mystery of the Sun and a spiritual life through which man attains the strength, already here during his life on earth to make the Sun sphere his own.

The third volume of the Dornach karma lectures again offers a great surprise. Rudolf Steiner begins to describe the karmic origin of those human beings who encounter one another within the anthroposophical movement. With the greatest, but also matter-of-fact, daring he proceeds to characterize and unveil our own decisive former earth lives. To anyone to whom it hadn't been clear so far, it becomes clear now: these are no neutral historical studies that are given to us, we are told what is to lead us ourselves to a more conscious grasp of our own spirit being. To begin with in a somewhat tentative style, mention is made of the fact that there are two different major streams that meet in the anthroposophical movement. The members of the *one stream* experienced their last significant incarnation in the first Christian centuries. Therefore, they have already been able to acquire the Christian element in a former life and now, after permeation with the Christian impulse, have a longing for the cosmic element that has been lost in historical Christianity. The members of the *other stream* had their last significant incarnation prior to the Mystery of Golgatha; they therefore bring with them something of the cosmic mood of the ancient mysteries. Now, however, they have the longing to find the Christ Mysteries from out of the cosmic element. Both streams flow into the anthroposophical movement, because there they find what they are seeking. The lectures, to begin with, retain something of a probing nature, leaving matters open, and starting over again in different, new ways when naming the centuries under consideration. The statements are not pressed into hard contours; the quality of a gentle nudge prevails, as if the question implied, "Do you follow me?"

The lectures of the third volume break into two groups; a fairly long time elapses between the first six and the following five lectures, and above all, an extremely important incision lies between them. The mood of lofty inspiration and harmony poured into the first group, after the incision, is replaced by a completely different element.

The harmony element can be felt particularly strongly in the description of the School of Chartres, where a Christian stream lived which, dwelling within the order of the Cistercians, could still sustain itself out of the wells of Platonism. Here Christianity preserved its cosmic connection, its cosmic inwardness, up into the twelfth century.

Something else is added to this indication concerning the centuries in which these two main streams of anthroposophical souls can seek for their earlier lives on earth. The destiny that

one carries within as an anthroposophist is not only traceable back to earlier incarnations; it is in particular attributable to events experienced jointly in the spiritual world between earth lives. Here for the first time, mention is made of the cosmic ritual which took place in the spiritual world at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, and which has been the source of inspiration for the fruitful Goethean era. The kindling moment in the conversation between Goethe and Schiller in 1794 is pictured: they speak about the archetypal plant and are touched by inspiration, whose fruit in Goethe's case was *The Fairytale*, and in Schiller's the *Letters Concerning the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Their being touched together by the light rays of the spiritual world is the actual source of the friendship between Goethe and Schiller.

A second karma-forming spirit event is the following: after the teachers of Chartres had passed through the portal of death, a supersensible council took place around the year 1200 between the Platonists who had just concluded their earthly life, and the Aristotelians who were just readying themselves to appear on earth as the great Dominicans (Thomas Aquinas and others). Many souls who are today incarnated as anthroposophists were witnesses to this spirit discussion.

The break in the development between the sixth and seventh lectures of the third volume is of such decisiveness that I had to mark it in the time schedule of the lectures by means of a broken line. Today we have the third series of karma lectures 1-6 and 7-11 in one volume. One simply reads on from the sixth to the seventh lecture, perhaps noting that there was an interval of several weeks, during which time Rudolf Steiner traveled to Holland and gave lectures in Arnheim. But if one becomes aware of the unprecedented force that suddenly appears from then on, one begins to understand the whole thing anew. The friends who in those days in Holland were with Rudolf Steiner, tell us that on several occasions he was so near the end of his physical strength that they feared for him and were deeply concerned. If this is taken into consideration, one recognizes how, in the three karma lectures in Arnheim, Rudolf Steiner does not side-step the dangers that seem to threaten him, but faces them head-on.

Beginning with Arnheim, the karma lectures assume a new style. From here on, the *Michael theme* enters into the karma lectures--until this point, Michael has not been mentioned--it appears like a flash of lightning. To start with, no longer gropingly, the two major karmic streams are summarized. The stream that has received its mark from the first Christian centuries is comprised mainly of Platonic souls, whereas those from the pre-Christian centuries are mostly Aristotelian souls. Also, the terms of "old" and "young" souls are applied in regard to the two groups. The old souls have a greater, the young souls a lesser number of incarnations behind them. Everything is presented in strongly condensed form. It now becomes clearly evident that we are concerned with the group of human souls who belong to Michael. A completely new theme! This is why the lectures continue to describe how the

supersensible ritual, prior to and after 1800, was not the only preparatory spirit-event for the destiny that today leads one to Anthroposophy. Now the sublime spirit-gathering is depicted which took place in the fifteenth century above the earth-realm of mankind--the *Michael school*; but this was opposed by a kind of school of Ahriman below the surface of the earth, which gave rise to the mechanistic civilization and produced, for example, the art of printing. Above the heads of human beings, Michael gathers his own into a great school of teaching, just before the light of ancient spirituality became extinct, in order to give instruction concerning the great spiritual streams of the history of mankind.

And now, surprisingly, a motif lights up which also has not surfaced until this point in the karma lectures; when, around 1200 A.D., the discarnate souls of the Platonists of Chartres and of the Aristotelians, who will become the Dominicans, deliberate with each other--what are they planning? They agree upon a joint guidance of mankind's destiny that will culminate at the end of the twentieth century. Then the decision must come. And Rudolf Steiner adds: from this follows that many of those human beings who have come to Anthroposophy in a genuine way will, after a relatively short interval, return to earth in a new incarnation even prior to the end of the century, when the culmination of the great spiritual conflicts of our time will take place.

In Arnheim, the *archangel-calendar* is also developed for the first time. Seven archangels take turns in guiding the various ages. Something that has been revealed earlier is part of this time structure: in 1879, we passed from an age of Gabriel to an age of Michael. And the description continues: up into the last pre-Christian Michael reign and for some time afterwards, Michael was the guardian of cosmic intelligence, and as such, from above, could imbue human beings with thoughts out of the spiritual worlds. But then the Gods let go of cosmic intelligence and it fell to earth. Human beings must take possession of it. But this is not possible without the Ahrimanic spirits contending for it with men. Therefore, the present Michaelic age consists of the battle of Michael with the Ahrimanic forces, which the archangel can only wage by means of the human beings allied with him.

Returning from Holland to Dornach, Rudolf Steiner retains the new apocalyptic, combative style which his descriptions have assumed. Everything resounds in the new Michaelic tone. Here in Dornach, he again depicts the great Michael school above, in the fifteenth century, in which those human beings who are gathered around Michael listen to the teaching of Michael together with beings of other hierarchies. In Arnheim, the picture of the supersensible Michael school was filled with dramatic tension by virtue of the contrast with the subterranean school of Ahriman. Now, in Dornach, the dramatic, apocalyptic element is intensified by means of the description of the lightning and thunder of a spiritual thunderstorm accompanying the celestial school of instructions, which is unleashed upon humanity by higher hierarchies. The outpouring of cosmic intelligence finds continuation and

intensification in a spiritual fire-rain through which the creative powers of the cosmos give earth-man the final inner structure necessary for the development of modern consciousness. Each one of us carries a sort of reminiscence of that stormy fire-rain in the depth of his soul. If he succeeds in bringing to life this fire-seed within himself, he will find the enthusiasm that he needs for Anthroposophy.

The apocalyptic element continues to increase toward the end of the third volume which includes the unimaginably suspenseful vision of the end of the century. Finally, we hear that even among the angels a division will occur. If human beings do not find the connection to the spirit, the angels who belong by their side will fall along with them. Human beings drag whole hierarchies of angels along into the break from the spirit. The Michaelic drama continues on through all the lectures given in Dornach up to the beginning of August 1924. In England also, where, during the summer meetings, Rudolf Steiner gives karma lectures in Torquay and London, the apocalyptic Michaelic theme dominates. Here, some formulations from Torquay:

"Michael sends his impulses through the evolution of humanity in the sphere of earthly life. He is the bringer of the Sun-forces, the spiritual forces of the Sun . . . The present rulership of Michael . . . signifies that the cosmic forces of the Sun penetrate right into the physical and etheric bodies of men . . . Christ, the Sun-Being . . . has lived since the Mystery of Golgotha in supersensible communion with the world of men. But before the whole Mystery connected with Christ can reveal itself to the soul, mankind must become sufficiently mature."

With these belongs the passage, where, speaking about his own life, Rudolf Steiner narrates how, at the time when he wrote his *Philosophy of Freedom*, he experienced Michael's entrance into the ether sphere surrounding the earth, an event that ignited the actual enthusiasm for his lifework. The start of the Michael age was 1879. All appearances to the contrary, we are increasingly entering the Sun-filled side of destiny. The Michaelic Sun-Mysteries of karma are facing the Mysteries of the great Moon teachers and thus create the balance.

One part of the tenth lecture in the third volume needs special mention here. Within the Michael revelations that are given us in these lectures in broad outlines, we receive a hint that has practical application for our innermost life--something that not only the young but also the older people should take to heart. Rudolf Steiner describes that in the disposition of those who gather around Anthroposophy, meaning those human beings who have a predisposed kinship to the Michael stream which they must bring to realization in life, a certain nuance is karmically built in. He states, in order to find a point of reference, that one can readily observe that in the case of the young people, who at that time had graduated from the Waldorf School, life would not become easier but harder because it would be more complicated. One should have no illusions. Through Anthroposophy life becomes more difficult,

not easier. What causes that? It is because of the law that *inner initiative* of soul-experience is an indispensable ingredient of the anthroposophist's karma. Rudolf Steiner says that much could be gained if anthroposophists only realized this and took it to heart--but instead, all too often they acted like bees that are afraid to use their sting--hence initiative gives way to a general fear of life. Many will become ill and won't know where the illness comes from. Illness in anthroposophists derives from sources other than those in people generally. Why are anthroposophists ill so frequently? Because they don't put into use the law of inner initiative, allowing themselves to be pushed into a defensive attitude toward life, into that of the passive bourgeois. An anthroposophist cannot afford this. Only with the sting of soul-initiative and constant willingness to confront life aggressively does one come to oneself.

After the tremendous suspense to which the karma lectures have risen in the second half of the third volume, the fourth volume poses a certain riddle, inasmuch as the stormy, dramatic element appears at first glance to have been completely replaced by a tranquil-pictorial one. In elaborate graphic karma portrayals, Rudolf Steiner gives a number of historical examples. Strindberg, Weininger, Count Hertling, and numerous other persons of history and the present time, all the way to Karl Julius Schroer, become transparent--revealing incarnations that they have lived through in earlier times. In the third volume, Rudolf Steiner speaks specifically of us, of the "karma of the anthroposophical society and movement." Does he now desist from this intimate Michaelic actualization in favor of great historical descriptions? One reason this question remains acute in us throughout all the lectures is because, from one day to the next, Rudolf Steiner keeps intimating a direct continuation of the subject matter dealt with in the third volume. Thus, he says in the third lecture: "The dominion of Michael is connected with what the Anthroposophical Movement in the deepest sense intends, with what this movement ought to be and do. Thus the events of which I shall speak are not unconnected, as we shall see next time, with the destiny, the karma of the Anthroposophical Society, and hence too with the karma of the great majority of the individual human beings who find themselves within this Society."

The question of how, despite the changed style in the karma lectures, the apocalyptic element progresses now in the last period of Rudolf Steiner's work among men, can become the key that opens a profound riddle of destiny. When Rudolf Steiner returned at the beginning of September from England, a large audience, composed of many interesting groups, had gathered in Dornach full of expectation. A variety of special courses had been announced that were now all supposed to be given simultaneously. Groups of actors, either belonging to the movement or close to it, together with those interested in speech formation, waited for the "Drama Course." Almost all anthroposophical doctors were present, who, together with the entire group of priests of the Christian Community, had been invited to the "Pastoral-Medical Course." Aside from these, many friends from all over had

arrived for the karma lectures and class lessons that were expected in the evenings. And now began the three weeks which, not only in anthroposophical history, but in spiritual history in general, represent a unique event. Rudolf Steiner, who on the first day told us, as if he had to apologize for it, that unfortunately he had returned from England very ill--each time, he could reach the podium from the car only by the greatest physical effort--daily gave four, if not five, lectures. In the end there were seventy lectures given by him in this brief timespan. Each one, in the most concentrated form possible, brought so much wealth that what was given in these three weeks alone would contain enough material and tasks for the work of many decades.

We as fellow-priests of the Christian Community experienced the breath-taking, far-reaching pace from one day to the next in a particularly clear way, not only because we were invited to all courses and evening lectures, but for another special reason: some time earlier Rudolf Steiner had promised us a course for this fall on the Apocalypse of St. John. During Easter, when he decided to give the pastoral-medical course for doctors and priests within the medical section, he said to us: "Well, there will still be enough time for a few lectures, two or three, about the Apocalypse as well." But now our course on the Apocalypse started as soon as the Drama Course and the others began. Nothing had been determined beforehand about the length of the courses. After we had been receiving such over-abundance for nearly two weeks day after day, I was given the not-so-pleasant task of asking Rudolf Steiner how long the courses would continue. After all, we did have congregations in those days that counted on their regular Sunday service, and we had already once given them notice by telegram of the delay in our return. Rudolf Steiner answered: "Please wait a few more days--then it can be determined how long we will continue the courses." Finally, the Drama Course had grown to nineteen, the Pastoral-Medical Course to eleven, and our course on the Apocalypse to eighteen lectures. It was impossible not to think that this was the farewell, and that Rudolf Steiner still wanted to give as much as was humanly possible.

In this connection and against this background, a direct continuation of the apocalyptic style and motivation of the second half of the third volume certainly was not needed in the contents of the remaining karma lectures. In reality, a whole apocalypse of continuing revelation concerning the anthroposophical karma is concealed within the ten lectures of the fourth volume. The complete series of special Michael events is entwined into the historical karma portrayals--events that have led from the last pre-Christian to the present Michael age, and that have worked and shaped the souls in the times between death and a new birth; the same souls who now, in our times, find their way to the anthroposophical movement and Society. A solemn and grand Michael sequence passes before our souls. The first highlight contains the part which the Michaelites--who by and large were not incarnated then on earth--had in the Mystery of Golgotha. They shared in the experience of the Christ Being's departure from the Sun:

through a twilight of the gods, a *Goetterdaemmerung*, suffered above, the light can now shine into the dark depths. Then, in the ninth century, when the great outpouring of cosmic intelligence from heaven to earth begins, there takes place as a light-filled counter-event to the spirit-negating council of 869 A.D. a celestial council, which plans the future of exoteric and esoteric Christianity for the centuries in which Ahriman's influence among humanity will increase. The third highlight is the spirit-conversation between Platonists and Aristotelians around 1200, where the vista opens to the end of our own century. Then follows the great school of instruction by Michael in the fifteenth century, and the supersensible ritual woven of divine imaginations that bestowed on Goethe's time its inner Sun-quality. After these preparations, and after the dawn of the new Michael age, Anthroposophy as the great Michael gift could come into being, and with it its lofty culmination that Rudolf Steiner's lifework reached during and after the Christmas Foundation Meeting.

In two versions, spoken and written, Rudolf Steiner put a seal on the bequest that he left us especially in the karma lectures. One is the "last address" which, after twice having to cancel the lecture, he wrested from his failing physique on Sunday the 28th of September. The double mystery of John and Michael blazed forth in deeply moving greatness, seed of infinite future perceptions. The invocation of the hierarchical powers allied with Michael in the concluding Michael verse was at the same time a call to the whole present and future age. The letters concerning the "Michael Mystery" that Rudolf Steiner subsequently wrote for us on his sickbed relate to his whole lifework and specifically to the lectures of the last nine months in the same way as does the Apocalypse at the end of the New Testament to the preceding texts. Here, the apocalyptic element, which since Arnheim flames through the karma lectures, continues directly, but in such a way that it must be "done"--it cannot be merely read and received as a teaching. In the Michael letters, the great intention, out of which Rudolf Steiner gave the karma lectures, continues. In these letters, Michael works directly on those souls who earnestly try to work with them.

¹ The content of this article was originally given (as a lecture) to the members of the Anthroposophical Society in Stuttgart on September 14, 1950. It was published under the title "Vom Aufbau der Karmavortraege" in Emil Bock's *Rudolf Steiner: Studien zu seinem Lebensgang und Lebenswerk* (Freies Geistesleben, Stuttgart, second edition, 1967; DM 38.-; 407 pages; available in German). Maria St. Goar translated the article. Due to its length we had to bring it in two parts. Great thanks to Diane Ramage for transcribing this article for use in the newsletter.

THE FESTIVALS



By Beth Wieting, Portland, Oregon.

Beth is a retired high school teacher, a long time member of the Anthroposophical Society, and a member of the Anthroposophical Society's Western Regional Council.

Many people have a relationship to the festival times of the year. In modern life, at these times one touches upon something beyond daily life and the personal life.

The festivals have to do in part with memory, but with a kind of memory that is older and deeper, more filled with feeling even than our memory of the traditions we experienced in childhood (or wish we had experienced) with the people to whom we felt closest.

Hinted at in many festival traditions is something quite immense, the experiences of consciousness of lives past, of whole cultural epochs and even longer periods of human evolution, experiences which express what the consciousness was then of the relationship of human beings to spiritual beings, to one another and to the whole spiritual world. This consciousness is still dimly with us; we are upheld by it because it has ever been part of the development of our souls. It is important for us to hold it; also in a certain respect it is even a Michaelic task.

The Archangel Michael, the Sun Archangel, has taken up, according to Rudolf Steiner, the role of Time Spirit for our present age, since the latter part of the 1800's. The last time he had a similar role was a period of approximately 300 years ending with the death of Alexander the Great. In ages past, of the angelic spirits nearest humanity, he had the greatest task: he administered the Cosmic Intelligence, the creative working of the spiritual beings which lies at the basis of everything that we see, of everything that has been created. It isn't any accident that his festival, the festival of Michaelmas (September 29), comes after a number of months which people usually devote to seeing the world! That is exactly what people want to do in spring and summer: people want to see and experience the world. All that is was gradually brought into being over many epochs under his leadership.

One could ask: why was it that Rudolf Steiner, whose own task was to bring people into the future, devoted the equivalent of hundreds of pages of lectures to characterizations of past spiritual life? It was necessary because, in the province of time, the Cosmic Intelligence has passed out of Michael's hands. It is important now for people to hold it, to hold the knowledge of it; to know how it was, the extent of it, the extraordinary sublime splendor of the spiritual working, how we came into being through it. People still have a faint awareness of this through the festivals. But there has also been

an immense shift throughout the evolution of humanity which is reflected even more in the festivals, and this is the possibility of what is developing in the human being.

As we come into Advent, the four weeks leading up to Christmas, it is possible to experience strongly what this period means if one talks to Waldorf kindergarten teachers: How do they prepare the room? What kinds of stories do they tell? What is it like for them to live through this period with very young children? There is something foretold through the lantern walk the older children take in the early evening on Martinmas, November 11.

If one takes walks in late afternoon in early winter, especially in a neighborhood with old trees with large overhanging limbs, one sees the light in the windows in the raw misty cold. The light shining out has a completely different quality at this time of year- the waxing of the inner light.

A certain culmination comes at Adam and Eve Day, December 24, which commemorates the original innocence of human kind. It is followed by December 25, the birth of the child. It is on this latter day, according to Rudolf Steiner, that we have a kind of second chance, that we can find again something of our original state, which we carry through the Twelve Holy Nights until Epiphany, January 6, a date still commemorated in the orthodox churches as the birth of the Christ Being. Rudolf Steiner indicates that this date had to do with the baptism in the river Jordan, when the Higher Being came in.

The Archangel Michael has more than one task in the present time. In one of them, Rudolf Steiner describes Him as being present, not in our world but in a world adjacent to ours, showing us pictures of the splendor of the past working of the Divine Spiritual Beings, because the Cosmic Intelligence has been seized and absorbed by materialistic spirits. We have to have something to compare with their versions, or we will fall into materialistic recreations of spirituality. Millions of souls were present at a preparatory “meeting” in the spiritual world in the early centuries of the modern age where we experienced all of the spiritual streams of humankind. So awareness of all of this is one task.

The other tasks have to do with the present and the future, and here Michael does not behave like the other Archangels-he does not give guidance before the deed. Instead, he responds to what human beings bring to him spiritually of their own work. Is it something in accordance with the real development of humanity and of the universe, or not? The initiative and the risk have passed to human beings.

So the festival periods in our time have also another aspect: something we have wrestled for, something wrestled forth, something that was not easy. It is possible that the experience of an adult in Advent may not be like that which one fosters for children. It might not be a secure, luminous period of expectation and promise, but rather a period of severe trials. During this time, the four weeks before Christmas, the angelic

Hierarchies closest to us draw back, one by one and finally the last week before Christmas, leave us on our own. This is a foreshadowing of the inner moral responsibility which human beings will need to assume, or try to assume. The question before us throughout Advent is: can we in spirit take hold of our own being in its true nature and bring it through its inner and outer trials?

The mid-winter festival, according to Rudolf Steiner, is now the main festival of the yearly cycle. Once upon a time, the main festival was at mid-summer. A human being could only experience the part of his higher nature which still resided in the spiritual world; he could only experience it as borne into him, for a short time at mid-summer. In community festivals of poetry, song and dance people offered something up to the spiritual forces pouring in from the heights and received back indications of their higher moral nature. Birds live in this way! They do not sing in spring and summer, said Rudolf Steiner only for the reasons modern science gives. In Dornach, Switzerland, where he lived, all kind of birds sing constantly at that time of the year, to a degree which we, surrounded by environmental silence, can't even imagine. They send forth their songs, which rise far up into the universe to return later in ways that only the birds can hear, permeated by something from the cosmos. People also used to experience something of this sort from what they sent forth which enabled them to sense their higher being.

Now, our human nature is actually hidden from the higher beings in mid-summer: conditions have changed. The earth is woven ‘round with a dense net of beings which somehow obscures the view of those angelic beings associated with us. We carry our thoughts outward every night when we go to sleep, but what lies in our feelings, in our soul nature is hidden.

At mid-winter it is different. The surrounding net has dissipated somewhat and pulled apart, so that the angelic hierarchies can perceive what is in our souls. They look in upon us as through windows, and what concerns them most is: are we moral beings? Do we have a real concern for others? (Even the tone of the Oregonian in the last few years has changed significantly at this time; they publish a whole insert of many pages with stories of people who need help.) One can think of all the Renaissance paintings of angelic beings clustered about the child in the manger, bending forward with devoted attention to look.

The birth of the higher self of the human being in modern times occurs when the human being is “within”, not when he is drawn out (or excited out) as in olden times. This birth does not happen only at mid-winter of course, but the experience of the mid-winter period is most characteristic of modern conditions of development. One is “within” because one has been able to assume responsibility for one’s own moral development. Rudolf Steiner’s book *How to Know Higher Worlds*, especially all the pre-conditions, describe the process. Even though one is “within”, paradoxically it is as if the spirit has been freed, as if it shines freely.

The following Christmas verse actually comes out of older mystery traditions. In the activity it encourages, it speaks to the present and the future.

Behold the Sun
At midnight hour
And build with stones
In lifeless ground.

So find in downfall
And in death's dark night
Creation's new beginning,
The morning's youthful might.

The heights of heaven reveal
The gods eternal Word;
The deeps shall guard and keep
Its gift of peace assured.

In darkness living
Create an inner Sun.
In substance weaving,
The spirit's joy is won.

Rudolf Steiner

People were once aware that a spiraling development of the soul took place around the cycle of the year. Beethoven actually had such a soul calendar, and Bach's Cantatas, over 300 of them, were composed for specific Sundays throughout the year. The texts correspond to a succession of moods and trials of the soul which was well known. If one is aware of the older cycle (which was based in reality) and then uses Rudolf Steiner's Calendar of the Soul for a number of years, one finds that one begins to grow up out of the natural cycle into another one, which can be a great relief, depending upon one's previous experience, and a blessing.

Sources from Rudolf Steiner:

Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts
The Calendar of the Soul
The Cycle of the Year as Breathing Process of the Earth
The Festival Book
Man and the World of the Stars

From Sergei Prokofieff: The Cycle of the Year

THE DREAMSONG OF OLAF ÁSTESON

By John Miles, Portland, OR

When viewed from a distance geographical locations and historical events merge together in similarity. This is often the view we get in America when someone tells us that something comes from Europe or from the East.

The various Mystery streams that were working in Europe before and during the Christian period are as different from each other as anything in the world. The **Eastern Mystery Stream** carried the ancient mysteries of Asia working through

Hellenistic culture, Gnosticism and Christianity and is the central ingredient of wisdom even today. The **Southern Mystery Stream** flowed from Egypt through Rome and has become the basic essence of jurisprudence and Catholicism. The **Western Mystery Stream** went underground in the ninth century AD. It joined with Parzival and the eastern stream, but it keeps on coming to the surface in the folk culture of America, Britain, western France and the western Iberian Peninsula, in Mayday, Halloween and the like. The **Northern Mystery Stream** containing the sagas of the Norsemen was identified by Rudolf Steiner as being essential for the Waldorf curriculum of grade four to enhance and support the separation and individualization the child feels when experiencing the nine year change. The gods or Aesir of these sagas are reflected in the developing individualistic characters that live in the grade four classroom.

From this Norse stream comes the *Dreamsong of Olaf Ásteson*. Here rough individualism meets the wisdom inherent in medieval Christianity and what arises is an unrefined picture of Kamaloca. To get a picture of kamaloca one could read lecture 3 in Steiner's 'Founding a Science of the Spirit'. The *Dreamsong* contains the elements we experience after death or through initiation. Rudolf Steiner tells us that this was possible because of the unique character of the earth each year when the forces of the cosmos enter the physical earth and impregnate it so it can green and bloom again next spring and summer.

Olaf tells of a journey which includes crossing the water [the abyss] and coming onto the Gjaller Bridge, the entrance to Hela's realm of the dead. His body is ripped apart and he suffers for the earthly deeds he has done to others. He goes through the realms of the elements of earth, water, air and fire. He meets the three beasts he has created [Metamorphosis of the Soul 1903] his bad earthly thoughts in the snake, his bad feeling and speech in the biting hound, and his bad deeds or will in the charging bull. At the last minute he is rescued by his holy god-mother and he becomes an observer of the punishment of the unjust and the battle between Micha-el and Grim Grey Beard. At the end we hear a version of the Beatitudes [Matthew 5] which is also echoed in three similar songs from the northern half of Britain, but exist only in fragments.

At the end of the Holy nights on January 6th 2006 the students of the Micha-el Institute will perform this *Dreamsong of Olaf Ásteson* at the Portland Waldorf School. Our performance will reflect the speaking-singing chant that Dr. Steiner identifies as the foundation of theater from the Mysteries. [See Speech and Drama.] This will be preceded by a seasonal fairy tale in Eurhythmy called "The little lights put out", which will also be performed by the students of the Michael Institute. More details will be given in invitational brochures available in the second week of December.

Please join us at 7pm for the Fairy Tale and at 8pm January 6th for the performance of the *Dreamsong of Olaf Ásteson*.

Portland Anthroposophical Society Calendar - January 2006

STUDY GROUPS

Anthroposophia Studies for Branch Life

Working with the spiritual realm helping our community life. Call for meeting times to Valerie Hope 503/775-0778.

Biodynamic Agriculture

First and third Sundays: Reading "Introduction to Culture and Horticulture" with potluck.

Meetings will be held at People's Food Coop, 3029 SE 21st Ave. Please contact Stephanie Buddenbaum 503-233-8849 (artwool@yahoo.com) or Sharon Parker 503-777-9086 (sharon.parker@providence.org) for more information and reading material.

Eurythmy

Training offered by Portland Eurythmy on weekends and evenings. Please contact Natasha Moss at 503/233-0663.

Karmic Relationships – currently full

Working through Rudolf Steiner's Karmic Relationships Cycle of lectures. Call James Lee for information 503/249-3804.

Life Beyond Death – currently full

Reading the collection of Steiner's lectures. Call Cheri Munske for information 503/772-2632.

Mystery Dramas

Most Wednesdays at 7 PM. Please call James Lee at 503/249-3804.

Waldorf Education and Teacher Training

Lectures and courses conducted throughout the year by the Micha-el Institute. Contact John Miles at 503/774-4946. johncmiles@usa.net

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday DECEMBER 17

Portland Eurythmy

End-of-Term presentation, Bothmer Hall, 5915 SE Division at 7PM. Refreshments will be served. For information call 503-233-0663.

Sunday DECEMBER 18

4th Advent Reading

3135 NE 17 Ave, from 7 PM to 8:30 PM.

Fourth of a four-part reading from two works by Rudolf Steiner: *The Four Sacrifices of Christ* and *The Pre-Earthly Deeds of Christ*. Copies of these works will be available at the reading. Contact James Lee at (503) 249-3804.

Saturday DECEMBER 24

Offering Service

Bothmer Hall 5909 SE Division - 11:30pm
For 11th and 12th graders, and Adults. For more information, please contact Lucia Mello at (503) 892-5296.
These Offerings Services were given by Rudolf Steiner to the students of the Waldorf Schools. The evening service was given to the 11th and 12th grades parents and teachers.

Sunday DECEMBER 25th

Christmas Service

Bothmer Hall 5909 SE Division at 10:00am
For Children (from first grade and up) and Adults
For more information, please contact Lucia Mello at (503) 892-5296.

These Offerings Services were given by Rudolf Steiner to the students of the Waldorf Schools. The morning service was given to First Graders and up.

DECEMBER 26, 2005 until JANUARY 6, 2006

Holy Nights Readings

7:30 PM – 9:00 PM; The Gospel of St John in Relationship to the other Gospels by Rudolf Steiner.

Monday, Dec. 26th, John & Joan Takacs,
3628 SE Tenino Street, 503- 775-5004

Tuesday, Dec. 27th, James Lee
3135 NE 17th Avenue, 503-249-3804

Wednesday, Dec. 28th, Kathy Kremer
1040 SW Oak Terrace, Lake Oswego, 503-636-1977

Thursday, Dec. 29th, Angela & Tom Sparks
5012 SE 34th Avenue, 503-772-5202

Friday, Dec. 30th, Cheri & Martin Munske,
7652 SE Lincoln Street, 503-772-2632

Saturday, Dec. 31st, Sara Genta & Wayne Gossett,
7116 SE 34th Avenue, 503-772-3313. Stay and celebrate the New Year including the dropping of lead.

Sunday, Jan. 1st, Dolores Julien
3725 SE Harvey, Milwaukie, 503-652-2579

Monday, Jan. 2nd, Diane Ramage,
7024 N Villard, 503 240-0908, please bring folding chairs

Tuesday, Jan. 3rd, Kevin & Celia Kane,
1805 SE 33rd, 235-9067

Wednesday, Jan. 4th, Tom & Ruth Klein,
3609 SE Center Street, 503-777-3176

Thursday, Jan. 5th, Leslie Cox & Ron Ennis,
4546 NE Alameda, 284-9184

Friday, Jan. 6th, Chrystal Godleske,
2327 SE 85th Avenue, 503-772-1118

Friday, JANUARY 6, 2006

Dreamsong of Olaf Åsteson

Performance by the students of the Micha-el Institute and others, 7 PM at the Portland Waldorf School, 2300 SE Harrison, Milwaukie OR 97222-7527. For more information contact John Miles at 503/774-4946.

Wednesday JANUARY 11**Peaceful Conflict Resolution with Very Young Children**

7-8:30 PM, Parenting Talk, by Kindergarten teacher Cyndia Ashkar. Free and open to the public at Mount Scott Community Center, 5530 SE 72nd Av. For information call Maya Muir at 503-654-2200 x 207

JANUARY 11-MARCH 1, Wednesday evenings**The Human Being: Foundations of Anthroposophy**

1/11 "Theosophy"; 1/18 "Sense perception"; 1/25 "Memory"; 2/1-8-15 "Willing, Feeling and Thinking"; 3/1 "Cosmic Intelligence"; A course by Beth Wieting 7.30 PM, at Portland Waldorf High School, 2300 SE Harrison, Milwaukie OR 97222-7527, \$10.00 per lecture. Contact Beth Wieting 503-774-8764

JANUARY 18-26, Wednesdays and Thursdays**Community-building suggestions from Rudolf Steiner**

1/18 "The Social Evolution of the World"; 1/19 "The Threefold Social Order for Today and its future development"; 1/25 "The Waldorf School as an expression of the Threefold Social Order"; 1/26 "The task for Humanity at the Present Time". For reading list & to learn more: contact John Miles at 503/774-4946.

Friday JANUARY 20**All School Open House 7- 9 PM**

Portland Waldorf School, 2300 SE Harrison, Milwaukie OR 97222-7527. An hour of presentations on the curriculum, and a chance to walk through the school, meet the teachers, and see student work. For information call Maya Muir at 503-654-2200 x 207

Wednesdays, JANUARY 25-March 29**Ten Painting classes**

Wednesday Mornings 9AM-10AM, 3135 NE 17th Ave, Portland OR 97212. Contact: Jannebeth Röell 503-249-3807 or jannebeth@mindspring.com

Wednesday JANUARY 25**What is anthroposophical music therapy?**

Come do a variety of exercises, play familiar and unfamiliar instruments and decide for yourself.
7PM- 8:30 PM at Bothmer Hall, 5915 SE Division, with music therapist Marion Van Namen. For information call 928-713-4814

FEBRUARY 10-11**Georg Kuhlewind in Seattle**

Workshop sponsored by the Seattle Branch. Details will be announced soon. Be sure to set aside this weekend to work with this widely published author and a leading exponent of Anthroposophy.

FEBRUARY 7-MARCH 14, Tuesday evenings**Introduction to Rod Puppetry**

The six session course will cover the making and use of simple rod puppets. Using gesture through story and verse we will begin to explore the therapeutic value of the rod puppet for today's child, 7-9PM. For more information or to register, please call Cheri Munske 503-772-2632.

Sunday FEBRUARY 12**First Class of the School of Spiritual Science**

Bothmer Hall, Blue card required – Discussion at 8:30 AM, class at 9:30 AM sharp. Please contact Jannebeth Röell 503/249-3807.

Sunday MARCH 12**First Class of the School of Spiritual Science**

Bothmer Hall (clinic waiting room), Blue card required – Discussion at 8:30 AM, class at 9:30 AM sharp. Please contact Jannebeth Röell 503/249-3807.

MARCH 11-12**Moving through Trauma**

A Spacial Dynamics workshop for those interested in what can really be done to overcome experiential hindrances, with Jaimen McMillan at Bothmer Hall, contact johntakacsdo@hotmail.com Saturday 6:00-9:00pm, continuing through Sunday 9:30am-1:00pm.

Sunday APRIL 9**First Class of the School of Spiritual Science**

Bothmer Hall, Blue card required – Discussion at 8:30 AM, class at 9:30 AM sharp. Please contact Jannebeth Röell 503/249-3807.

Sunday MAY 14**First Class of the School of Spiritual Science**

Bothmer Hall, Blue card required – Discussion at 8:30 AM, class at 9:30 AM sharp. Please contact Jannebeth Röell 503/249-3807.

Sunday JUNE 11**First Class of the School of Spiritual Science**

Bothmer Hall, Blue card required – Discussion at 8:30 AM, class at 9:30 AM sharp. Please contact Jannebeth Röell 503/249-3807.

Sunday JULY 9**First Class of the School of Spiritual Science**

Bothmer Hall, Blue card required – Discussion at 8:30 AM, class at 9:30 AM sharp. Please contact Jannebeth Röell 503/249-3807.

JULY 19 - 23**Artemisia Conference**

Reed College Campus, Portland, Oregon

AUGUST 16-26, 2006**Spacial Dynamics Course**

Mechanicvill NY, contact johntakacsdo@hotmail.com

NOVEMBER 5-10, 2006**Spacial Dynamics Course**

Camp Karotli in Boring, contact johntakacsdo@hotmail.com

MARCH 9-14, 2007**Spacial Dynamics Course**

Camp Karotli in Boring, contact johntakacsdo@hotmail.com