

Apparent Contradictions: Soul Ordeal in Spiritual Development

By Steve Usher, Austin, Texas

A small, largely invisible fraternity exists in and about the Anthroposophical Society. It has no membership list or outer organization. It is a union of souls bound by spiritual threads, a spirit associationⁱ. They are united by their common activity: shared labors and struggles with the works of Rudolf Steiner. For them a hidden world exists in which they move about like the ordinary person on the earth's surface. It is the new world of ideas about the nature of reality, a world that Rudolf Steiner discovered and to which he gave thought forms. It is the world of the new mysteries accessible to those who acknowledge Steiner and exert spiritual effort studying his works. The members of this fraternity are Rudolf Steiner's occult brothers and sisters.ⁱⁱ

Like knights-errant they journey through the new spiritual terrain and do battle. They must battle the monsters that growl in the fire of their instinctive life – like the poodle in Faustⁱⁱⁱ -- any time they try to enter the new domain. Once within the new world they are challenged by contradictions that threaten their trust in the bridge that Rudolf Steiner built, the bridge over the abyss separating the sense world from the new spiritual world. If trust is lost then the bridge vanishes and the knight finds himself back in the sense world. About trust in the master Steiner explains, "With the Rosicrucian path, the guru becomes always more a friend whose authority rests on inner agreement. Here it is not possible to have any relationship but one of strong personal trust. Should but the slightest mistrust arise between teacher and pupil, then the essential bond which must remain between them would be torn apart, and any forces which play between teacher and pupil would no longer work."^{iv}

Here follows the tale of a powerful contradiction that nearly overcame me. Wonder was opening the portals of my soul as I followed the thoughts in Rudolf Steiner's lectures on the Gospel of St. John (1908). These lectures picture some of the most profound and beautiful thought about the nature of Christianity.^v As I enjoyed the vista a powerful contradiction reared its head and almost unseated me.

To make clear what I experienced it will be necessary to reconstruct, at least briefly, some of the content. The lectures describe the consciousness of men who lived at the beginning of the Christian era and earlier. Steiner's investigations revealed that people of these past ages did not experience their personal identity in the manner of modern people. In those bygone ages a person identified himself as a member of his tribe or group. This was not an abstract matter. Those early people shared a common memory with their ancestors. Imagine that you had not only your own memories but also the memories of your parents, grandparents, great grandparents, etc. It was out of this experience of shared memory that the ancient Hebrew said, "I and father Abraham are one." Connection with the community through shared blood and memory created a strong bond of love among community members. They felt sheltered within the group ego. This love, however, did not extend to people outside the community. Moreover, group ego consciousness made a person less than truly free.

For true love to be possible, love that an individual freely gives to another, it was necessary for the individual ego to be separated from the group and to stand on his own. The Christ impulse is connected with the development of the truly free ego and the possibility for the ego to freely bestow love even on God.

A transitional moment between the time of group egos and individual egos is described in the Gospel of St. John as the wedding of Cana. Steiner explains that Cana of Galilee was a place where people of mixed blood lived. These people had broken away from the old blood ties and had married outside their tribes. So Christ went to a wedding between people of mixed blood. The Gospel tells how they ran out of wine and how, at the request of his mother, Christ turned water into wine.

Steiner explains this miracle as arising from a power that wove between Jesus and his mother. The usual rendering of the text, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" is incorrect. The true text is, "This has to do with me and thy blood relationship." Steiner describes how what worked in the power of their shared blood made it possible for the wedding guests to experience the water as wine. Christ's time had not yet come and so it was still necessary to work with the old forces.

The contradiction that rose in my soul upon reading this passage concerned statements Steiner made a year later in 1909 in his lectures on the Gospel of St. Luke. There a most extraordinary revelation is given: the mystery of the two Jesus children. Only the briefest description can be given here. A careful review of the Gospel of St. Matthew and the Gospel of St. Luke reveals that both gospels present a genealogy of Jesus. Both genealogies include David the king. But the Matthew Gospel proceeds from David to his son Solomon the king while the Luke Gospel precedes to David's son Nathan the priest. Evidently the two gospels describe two different children. These two children have different experiences. For example, the shepherds visit the Nathan child of the Luke Gospel while the three kings visit the Solomon child of the Matthew gospel.

Steiner's research reveals that a great initiate, Zarathustra, incarnated into the Solomon child and the child developed a considerable learning and stature. In contrast the soul incarnated into the Nathan child was very simple, indeed, Steiner claims this soul had never been incarnated before. It was, however, a very special soul that had been preserved from the Fall by the spiritual world. This child possessed a remarkable quality of heart that touched everyone around him but he was not wise and learned in the worldly sense.

The New Testament describes the finding in the temple. Here the 12-year-old Nathan Jesus is separated from his parents. They eventually find him teaching a group of Hebrew scholars. They are astonished at the change that has come over their previously simple child. Steiner explains that at this moment the ego of the great Zarathustra left the body of the Solomon child and entered the body of the Nathan child thus transforming him to the point of being almost unrecognizable to his parents.

Steiner's research discovers the following sequence of events. The Solomon child, now without an ego, dies. Then the Luke mother dies followed by the death of the Matthew father. The widowed father and mother marry and form a family. Eventually the second father dies leaving the Matthew mother to care for Jesus. In the Luke Gospel lectures Steiner underscores that after these events Jesus is living with his foster mother.

For the sake of completeness the great event, which occurs in Jesus' 30th year, should be described. At this time the Zarathustra ego has finished perfecting the three sheaths – physical, etheric, and astral -- of Jesus. The ego makes the great decision to sacrifice the three sheaths and departs the body, giving it a last impulse to walk to the river Jordan.^{vi} At the baptism the great Solar God, the Solar Logos or Christ, takes possession of the body and the God-Man's three years of earthly life begin.

The wedding feast of Cana takes place after the baptism. The contradiction that nearly unseated me is this: According to Steiner's research, as reported in the 1909 Luke lectures, the mother of Jesus, at the time of the wedding, was not his blood mother. It was his foster mother. But Steiner goes to considerable lengths in his 1908 lectures to make clear that the miracle of Cana is based on the working of forces of common blood!

This is not a minor point but goes to the heart of Steiner's thought in his very important John Gospel lectures. I wondered, Did Steiner make a major error in his 1908

If you are interested to learn more about the Portland Branch of the Anthroposophical Society, please call Diane Rumage at (360) 241-7854.

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Questions, suggestions and submissions may be sent by e-mail to anthroposophy@earthlink.net. Items selected for publication in the *Portland Anthroposophic Times* may be edited for style, content and length. The deadline for submissions to the *Portland Anthroposophic Times* is the first day of each month for publication in that month's edition. Submit calendar items to branchcalendar@mindspring.com no later than the first of each month for publication in the next edition.

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lectures? Was he confused and only saw the correct state of affairs in 1909 when he lectured on Luke? But if he made such a major mistake in 1908 how could one be comfortable that he had not made another one in 1909? As such thoughts work in the soul the whole great spiritual landscape of Anthroposophy begins to dissolve. The student is losing trust in the teacher and the bond between them is shattering.

I did not give up struggling with the contradiction. As I reviewed the material it slowly dawned on me that the blood relationships Steiner describes in the John Gospel lectures are not limited to immediate relatives. Rather the relationship he characterizes is tribal: all the people related by the blood of Abraham flowing in their veins. But this tribal kinship certainly united the Jewish Jesus and his Jewish foster mother. Consequently Steiner's description holds perfectly well in light of the later revelations in the Luke lectures! With this realization I passed through a great ordeal of soul and the bond of trust with the master was renewed. I was free to continue my journeys through the spiritual landscape.

Stephen Usher will be speaking to the Portland Branch on three dates in the autumn.

Friday, OCTOBER 24th on [An Anthroposophical Publisher's Private Conversations with Saul Bellow on Spirituality](#). This lecture tells the story of how Saul Bellow came to write the foreword to Rudolf Steiner's *Boundaries Of Natural*. Open to the public.

Saturday, OCTOBER 25 on [Anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner & the Three-Folding of Society](#). The lecture will explore the history of the threefold idea, the idea, and its opponents. Open to the public.

Sunday, OCTOBER 26 on [The Christmas Foundation Conference and the Foundation Stone](#) In this presentation Stephen Usher explores the central event of the Christmas Foundation Conference of the Anthroposophical Society (Dec. 1923-Jan 1924) with particular emphasis on the events of December 25, 1923. In particular the talk will explore the distinction between the Christmas Foundation Verse and the Foundation Stone itself. This one lecture is for Anthroposophical Society members with Pink cards only.

Locations to be announced in future newsletter editions.

For more information, or to offer your time to help the Portland Branch carry the event, call Valerie Hope at (503) 775-0778

Natural Science Section Will Meet in Portland this November

Jennifer Greene, Blue Hill, Maine

The 2008 Natural Science/Mathematics & Astronomy Section annual conference will take place in Portland, Oregon from Thursday evening, November 20th, to Sunday, midday, November 23rd.

Michael Howard and Siegwart Elsas will join us and the theme will be "The Art of Research: Cultivating Feeling as an Organ of Perception for Scientists."

Details of the conference will be forthcoming at a later date. We will be exploring this theme together in a more open time frame, with more time to share our considerations.

We also encourage contributions and reports describing your own research or research that would be valuable for our work. There are already a couple of contributions and reports in the pipeline.

Please save these dates and join us. It might be prudent to book your air tickets way in advance. There are some bargains!

This event is open to members of the School for Spiritual Science.

Footnotes for Steve Usher's Article:

ⁱ Ita Wegman used the term "spirit association." See *A History of the School of Spiritual Science*, The First Class, Johannes Kiersch, Temple Lodge, 2006, pp.145-146.

ⁱⁱ For the concept of Occult Brotherhood see *Rosicrucian Esotericism*, Anthroposophic Press, 1978, lecture of June 3, 1909.

ⁱⁱⁱ Unpublished ms titled *The Problem of Faust*, lecture of Sept. 30, 1919; available from Rudolf Steiner Library in Ghent, NY.

^{iv} Rudolf Steiner, *Esoteric Development*, Anthroposophic Press, 1982, "The Path of Knowledge and Its Stages: The Rosicrucian Spiritual Path," lecture of Oct. 20, 1906. The sentence is on page 138. The late Joel Kobran pointed out to me that the sentence in the book is not correctly translated. The published text has the word "ruptured" while the correct translation is "torn apart" as indicated in this article.

^v Rudolf Steiner, *The Gospel of St. John*, Anthroposophic Press, 1973, p. 77.

^{vi} Steiner's *Fifth Gospel* gives a remarkable description of what happens during this egoless body's walk to the Jordan.

The Cathedral of Our Lady of Chartres

By Diane Ramage, Portland, OR

The Platonists of Chartres in the 11th and 12th century lived strongly in Imagination, and conveyed spiritual truths via imaginative means. This brief article wishes to present the image of the West Facade of Chartres Cathedral and the image of the human being with the chakras. Mystery sites incorporate the concept of the body of man as the temple. A study of sacred architecture through the ages reveals many aspects of this mystery.

Rudolf Steiner describes the soul, the astral body and these chakras in chapter 5 of *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*. The entire book describes the path of development of the soul.

The site of Chartres Cathedral was devoted to the Virgin for many centuries, and various churches were erected there. Fire seems to have often destroyed the buildings, and in 1194 it was burnt for the last time. Not everything was destroyed, and it's believed the West Facade was started around 1144 AD. A relic believed to be a garment worn by the Virgin at the birth of Jesus is housed at Chartres.

The crown chakra at the top of the head is sometimes equated with Saturn and the 1000 petalled lotus, but also sometimes with 8 petals. Steiner does not mention it chapter 5. On the West Facade of Chartres Cathedral at the top of the center between the 2 towers is a statue of Christ on an octagonal cupped base, which

would be seen with the sun rising behind it. Below that is a statue of the Virgin holding her Child, flanked by 2 angels kneeling, which corresponds with the 2 petalled Jupiter chakra between the brows. Then a row of 16 knights below that stretches between the 2 towers, and relates to the 16 petalled Mars throat chakra. Then the beautiful 12 petalled rose window below that represents the 12 petalled heart chakra. Below that is a window with 10 panels in the center corresponding with the 10 petalled Venus chakra of the navel. Then comes the tympanum with Christ (surrounded by the 4 fixed zodiacal figures) and arched with rows of 6 figures, and the apostles below him grouped in 4 x 3, but with 2 other figures added, 1 on each side, so that there is a 6 fold grouping there as well. This relates to the 6 petalled Mercury chakra situated between the navel and the base of the torso. Then the 4 petalled Moon chakra at the bottom of the torso corresponds with the square (4-sided) door through which one enters the cathedral. The relationship of the planets to the number of chakra petals could be discussed at another time. Many more mysteries are included in this architecture, but I just wanted to present this for the moment.



Portland Anthroposophical Society Calendar - July 2008

Ongoing Events and Study Groups

African Drumming

Every Thursday evening from 7-8 pm in the high school building of Portland Waldorf School (2300 SE Harrison Street, Milwaukie). \$40 for 5 lessons, \$10 drop-in. Drums provided. No experience necessary. Marion Van Namen (503) 956-4046.

Anthroposophical Medicine Study Group

Once a month Monday (after the second Sunday) at the Takacs Clinic 7-8:30 PM. John Takacs at johntakacsdo@hotmail.com or Kevin Kane at drkev@involved.com.

Curative Education

Second and fourth Friday 7:30 PM – 9PM study of Rudolf Steiner's *Education for Special Needs*. Call Betty Baldwin for information 503-747-6367.

Deepening Our Experience with Six Basic Exercises

Saturday 9:00-10:00 AM once a month. Beginning and advanced students welcome. 2525 NE 13th Ave, Portland, OR 97212. For information call Twila at (503) 281-9349 or write her by e-mail at Twila@spiritone.com

Eurythmy

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

Karmic Relationships

Working through Rudolf Steiner's Karmic Relationships Cycle of lectures. Call James Lee for information 503 249-3804 or e-mail him at anthroposophy@earthlink.net.

Mystery Dramas, with Speech-Formation Exercises

Two Wednesdays a month, 7:30 - 9:00 PM in Portland. Currently working with Rudolf Steiner's *Portal of Initiation* and the *Genesis* lectures. No acting experience necessary, just a love of the Word. Call Diane Ramage at 360 241-7854 for information.

Mystery Knowledge and Mystery Centers

Meeting once a month on the fourth Thursday at 7 PM at Bothmer Hall. Contact Joan Takacs by e-mail at joantakacs@yahoo.com.

Occult Science

Meeting weekly on Tuesdays from 7:30 - 9:00 pm at 3046 NE 33rd Avenue, Portland, OR 97212. Contact Diane Ramage 360 241-7854 for information.

Portland Waldorf School Community Choir

Every Friday morning from 8:45 - 10:00 am (at the Portland Waldorf School, 2300 SE Harrison Street, Milwaukie) in the music room of the high school building, whenever school is in session. Anyone in- and outside the PWS community who enjoys singing songs through the seasons, across the centuries and around the world is very welcome, including drop ins. This event is free and a community builder. More information: Marion Van Namen (503) 956-4046.

Portland Youth Discussion Group

The Portland Youth Discussion Group, a group of people youthful in mind, body and spirit, gathers to discuss questions of how Anthroposophy compares and relates to other ideas in the realms of philosophy, spirituality, religion, economics, social activism, individual and social development, and relationships. We welcome new people who are open to exploring Spiritual Science and conducting their own research to join us. For more information, please contact Leslie Loy at (503) 819-3399 or leslielal@yahoo.com.

Spinning and Spiritual Science

Gathering on the first Saturday of each month, 3 PM to 5PM, to study *Art as Spiritual Activity*, lectures by Rudolf Steiner 1888-1923. We work with the fiber arts and spinning wheels. Call Marsha Johnson 503- 309- 4223 to sign up.

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

Submit your group or calendar event announcement by the end of each month for publication in the next month's newsletter.

Submit calendar information to branchcalendar@mindspring.com

Upcoming Events**JULY 2- AUGUST 13****Music Theory - The Basics**

Seven Wednesday evenings from 7-9 PM at 5705 SE Belmont Street, Portland. \$100 if you sign up by June 15th, \$120 thereafter. \$20 drop in fee. Marion Van Namen at marion@octavemusictherapy.com or 503-956-4046

Sunday, JULY 13**First Class of the School of Spiritual Science**

Bothmer Hall, Blue card required – Discussion on Lesson 9 at 8:30 AM, class at 9:30 AM sharp. Lesson 10. Please contact Jannebeth Röell 503/249-3807 or Diane Rumage at (360) 241-7854.

JULY 14- 19**Micha-el Institute – Class Teacher Deepening Conferences Grades 1, 2, 3 or 4**

See brochure for details, held at Portland Waldorf School, 2300 SE Harrison, Milwaukie. If you are willing to let a room in your house please e-mail johncmiles@usa.net or call 503- 774-4946 for rates of compensation.

JULY 25-27**The Great Passage**

A Coros meditative retreat with Dennis Klocek, at Whidbey Institute, Chinook on Whidbey Island. For info: <http://www.corosinstitute.org> Call Crystal Godleske 503 816 2440 about carpool from Portland.

AUGUST 12-16**Mystery Drama Conference**

The Threefold Mystery Drama Group in Spring Valley, NY, under the direction of Barbara Renold, is planning a conference on the theme of the connection between Goethe's fairy tale, *The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily*, and Rudolf Steiner's first mystery drama, "The Portal of Initiation". Contact Barbara Renold at barbararenold@yahoo.com or by telephone at 845-356-0674.

AUGUST 15-17**Myth of Me**

Finding the root of personality, a workshop with Dennis Klocek, Waldorf School, Carbondale, CO. For info: <http://www.corosinstitute.org>.

AUGUST 18- 21**Micha-el Institute – Home Schooling Workshop “The Power of Imagination”**

See brochure for details, at Shining Star School, 4317 NE Emerson, Portland OR 97218. Contact 503 774-4946 or email johncmiles@usa.net.

AUGUST 22- 26**Micha-el Institute – Foundation Conference**

See brochure for details, at Shining Star School, 4317 NE Emerson, Portland OR 97218. Contact 503 774-4946 or email johncmiles@usa.net.

Wednesday AUGUST 27**Portland Branch Council Meeting**

7 PM – 8PM study of the theme of the year followed by a business meeting at the home of Ruth and Tom Klein, 3609 SE Center, Portland OR 97202, phone: 503-777-3176. All Branch members are welcome to attend.

Sunday, SEPTEMBER 14**First Class of the School of Spiritual Science**

Bothmer Hall, Blue card required – Discussion on Lesson 10 at 8:30 AM, class at 9:30 AM sharp. Lesson 11. Please contact Jannebeth Röell 503/249-3807 or Diane Rumage at (360) 241-7854.

OCTOBER 2-3**Money Can Heal**

Talk and workshop with Siegfried Finser, founder of the Rudolf Steiner Foundation. Contact Lauren Johnson at lauren.johnson@portlandwaldorfschool.org Details TBA.

OCTOBER 17-19**Christian Rosenkretz –Living a Spiritual Life in the Modern World and the Anthroposophical Society Annual General Meeting**

Who is Christian Rosenkretz and how does he work in the world? In this conference we will explore the life and mission of Christian Rosenkretz, with particular focus on the power of Anthroposophy, today's Rosicrucian path, to bring about transformation in modern life. More at www.portlandbranch.com. The conference is sponsored by The Anthroposophical Society in America in cooperation with the Los Angeles Branch, 110 Martin Alley, Old Town Pasadena, CA 91105-1900. The annual general meeting of the Anthroposophical Society takes place on the Sunday following the conference.

Friday, OCTOBER 24**An Anthroposophical Publisher's Private Conversations with Saul Bellow on Spirituality**

A lecture given by Stephen Usher. This lecture tells the story of how Saul Bellow came to write the foreword to Rudolf Steiner's *Boundaries Of Natural Science*. In the process of obtaining the foreword publisher Stephen Usher came to know Bellow and had a number of interesting talks with him about Steiner's spiritual scientific discoveries including those described in *Work of the Angel in Man's Astral Body*. The talk will explore the conversations and Bellow's attitude to Steiner and Anthroposophy. It will also discuss what Bellow had to say about Steiner in *HUMBOLDT'S GIFT*, a book for which Bellow received the Pulitzer prize. 8PM Location TBA, admission \$15.00.

Saturday, OCTOBER 25**Anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner & the Three-Folding of Society**

A lecture by Stephen Usher. The lecture will explore the history of the threefold idea, the idea, and its opponents. Going back to 1917 Stephen Usher will point to the moment when Steiner first postulated the idea in a conversation with Otto Lerchenfeld in response to Lerchenfeld's heartfelt question about how to bring some sanity into the madness of the First World War. The basic threefold idea will then be outlined along with Steiner's idea of the Fundamental Social Law and the Law of True Price. From there the lecture will look at the opponents of the Threefold idea both historical and current. 8PM Location TBA, admission \$15.00

Sunday, OCTOBER 26**The Christmas Foundation Conference and the Foundation Stone**

In this presentation Stephen Usher explores the central event of the Christmas Foundation Conference of the Anthroposophical Society (Dec. 1923-Jan 1924) with particular emphasis on the events of December 25, 1923. In particular the talk will explore the distinction between the Christmas Foundation Verse and the Foundation Stone itself. Members with Pink cards only, 4 PM Location TBA, admission \$15.00.

NOVEMBER 20-23**The Art of Research: Cultivating Feeling as an Organ of Perception for Scientists**

The 2008 Natural Science/Mathematics & Astronomy Section annual conference will take place in Portland, Oregon. Michael Howard and Siegwart Elsas will be keynote speakers. Details TBA

Portland Newsletter Team News

The Portland Newsletter is currently produced by Jannebeth Röell, Diane Ramage and James Lee.

The newsletter team seeks other interested and willing individuals to participate in this important community building activity.


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