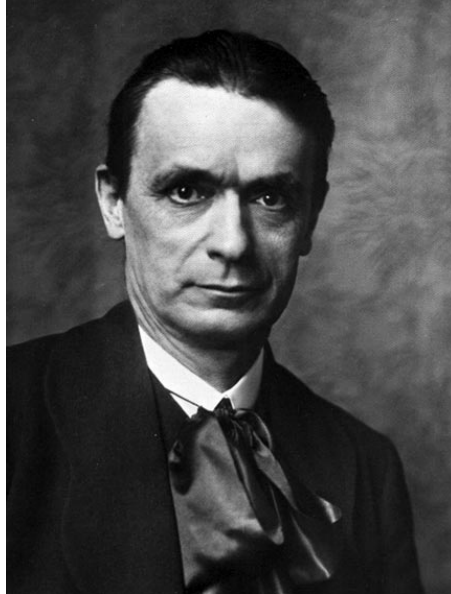


Great Esotericists

Rudolph Steiner (1861–1925)



Rudolf Joseph Lorenz Steiner was born on February 25 or 27, 1861. The son of a railroad telegraph operator, he was born at Kraljevec, Silesia, now part of Croatia but then part of the Austrian Empire. His birth was difficult: “Rudolf Steiner was so poorly handled by the midwife that he lost a lot of blood, . . . Because of this bleeding, Rudolf was always a sickly child. He was eight before he could begin school.”²

He was an exceptionally bright child, however, and in due course the family moved to Inzersdorf, Austria, where Steiner was able to study at the Vienna Institute of Technology. He went on to the University of Rostock, where he earned a doctorate in philosophy in 1891, after defending his dissertation on Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s concept of the ego.

Steiner first achieved fame for his work as editor of the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, at the Goethe archive in Weimar, Germany. He wrote the introductions to, and commentaries, on four volumes of Goethe’s scientific writings. He also published two books of

his own on Goethe’s philosophy. In 1899, Steiner published an article, “Goethe’s Secret Revelation,” which discussed the allegorical meaning of Goethe’s “The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily.” Fascination with fairy tales and myths would last throughout his life, and he would incorporate several into the mystery plays he wrote many years later.

Rudolf Steiner developed a growing interest in both philosophy and esotericism. Publication of “Goethe’s Secret Revelation” led to an invitation by the Count and Countess Brockdorff

About the Author

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to speak to a gathering of Theosophists in Berlin. By 1902, Steiner was giving regular lectures at the Berlin lodge of the Theosophical Society. Two years later, Annie Besant, the Society's president in Adyar, India, appointed him head of the German/Austrian Branch. Formal membership also gave him entrance to the Esoteric Section, within the Society, whose meetings were closed to the public.

In 1899, Steiner married Anna Eunicke, a widow with four daughters and a son. Steiner's own words betray a lack of warmth in his relationship to the family: "I saw the children only when there was some occasion for me to do so. That happened frequently, since I was looked upon just as if I belonged to the family. My meals, however, except the morning coffee and supper, I took elsewhere."³ After a few years, Steiner and Anna separated. Meanwhile, he had met Marie von Sivers, who owned the headquarters building of the Theosophical Society in Berlin. A close spiritual relationship quickly developed between them, and Marie became a close collaborator in Steiner's work. The two married in 1914, three years after Anna's death.

Rudolf Steiner and the Theosophical Society were never a good match. He absorbed some of the trans-Himalayan teachings of Helena Blavatsky, Besant, Charles Leadbeater, and others, but his inclinations lay toward the western esoteric traditions of Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry. Steiner had obtained warrants from Theodore Reuss for the Memphis-Misraim Rite of Freemasonry, and he conducted theurgic rituals in the Esoteric Section of the German Theosophical Society.

In 1912, Steiner severed his links with the Theosophical Society, following a dispute with Besant over claims that the young Jiddu Krish-

namurti was the vehicle for the reappearance of the Christ.⁴ Steiner formed his own Anthroposophical Society, taking many of the German Theosophists with him. For a while, Steiner continued to conduct rituals, though he

stated that he changed the initiatory rituals because former members of the Esoteric Section had violated their initiatory oaths.⁵

Rudolf Steiner's work covered a broad field, including esoteric philosophy, education, drama and dance, architecture, alternative medicine, and biodynamic farming. Steiner developed the system of Waldorf education, which continues to flourish today. And his research in biodynamic

farming continues to influence organic agriculture. He and Marie created the new artistic dance form of *eurythmy*.

Much of Steiner's esoteric teachings was based on clairvoyant reading of the Akashic Records. Steiner wrote comparatively little, but he gave a great many lectures, normally speaking without notes. Most of the books attributed to him are compilations of notes taken by students. They contain profound insights, though his stream-of-consciousness style of lecturing—and possible misunderstandings by his students—challenge the reader. Poor translations from the original German further challenge English-speaking readers. The Steiner community is now in the process of retranslating all his works to improve readability.

One of the topics Steiner addressed was the early history of the Earth Scheme. Trans-Himalayan teachings identify our planet's previous incarnations as an unnamed first chain, the Venus Chain, and the Moon Chain (we are now in the fourth, "Earth" Chain). Steiner, however, spoke of the Saturn, Sun and Moon "Evolutions."⁶ The Saturn Evolution, accord-

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ing to his description, resembles a protoplanetary disk rather than a discrete planet.

Rudolf Steiner's formal contacts with Christianity were limited; he served as an acolyte in his Roman Catholic childhood, and he helped found the Christian Communities—to be discussed in their turn—toward the end of his life. Yet Steiner considered himself a Christian esotericist. His *Christianity as Mystical Fact* was published in 1902. He wrote commentaries on the four gospels and composed a “fifth gospel” of his own.⁷ And many of his lectures touch on subjects relevant to Christianity.

Attracting considerable controversy was his assertion that the child “Jesus” in the synoptic gospels was actually two distinct children. The child described in *Matthew* was descended from King Solomon, and the one in *Luke* from Nathan the Priest. At age twelve, the “individuality” who was in the former, whom Steiner identified as Zarathustra, “forsook the body of the Solomon Jesus-child and went over into the body of the Nathan Jesus-child.”⁸ The Solomon child died, while the Nathan Jesus, now embodying Zarathustra, impressed the priests in the temple with his wisdom.⁹ Many years later, this same Jesus was overshadowed by the Christ at the Baptism in the Jordan and went on to preach in Galilee and Judaea.

Another controversial topic involved the entities Ahriman and Lucifer. Both had long, and quite separate, histories in the teachings of various world religions, but Steiner presented them as dualistic expressions of evil: Ahriman embodied materialism, and Lucifer glamour and ungrounded mentalism. Ahriman and Lucifer jointly conducted the triple temptations of Christ in the wilderness. But since resisting the temptations, Christ has served as a mediator between the pair of evil opposites, turning

them into instruments of divine Purpose.¹⁰ The notion of mediation between dualistic forces calls to mind Zoroastrian and Kabbalistic teachings. Ahriman's influence is increasing—an observation that resonates today as much it did in the early twentieth-century—and is expected to peak, according to Steiner, when Ahriman takes a physical body sometime in the third millennium CE. Lucifer allegedly incarnated in the third millennium BCE.

The Christian Communities emerged from a meeting of Anthroposophists in 1922, at which a desire was expressed to reform and renew Christian worship. The outcome was the formation of a new Christian sect with a distinctive priesthood and sacraments. In particular, the Eucharist was presented as the Act of Consecration of Man. It “implies that the ultimate goal of our lives is to become a true human being. Christ, who himself became a human being, enlivens our true humanity. He gives his healing, transforming power to those who seek him, who recognize him and who follow him.”¹¹ Steiner initially supported the Christian Communities, but soon he feared they were drawing too many members away from the Anthroposophical Society. Hoping to stem the exodus, he declared: “Anyone who has once found his way to the Anthroposophical Society does not need religious renewal.”¹²

Steiner established a short-lived esoteric school in the early years of the Anthroposophical Society. And in 1923, in his last years, he founded the School of Spiritual Science. Steiner had ambitious plans for the latter, envisioning a broad curriculum covering the arts, sciences, medicine, even astronomy, in addition to esoteric studies. The courses on esotericism were the only ones to come to fruition, and they are still being offered.



Figure 1. The first Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland

The Anthroposophical Society established its headquarters to Dornach, Switzerland. Steiner designed the “Goetheanum,” dedicated to Goethe, to serve as a cultural center and world headquarters of the Anthroposophical Society. The unusual design consisted of a double-dome wooden structure over a curving concrete base (Figure 1). Stained-glass windows introduced color into the interior, and paintings and sculptures graced the many rooms. The building was destroyed by arson at the end of 1922. Undeterred, Steiner designed a second Goetheanum, this time to be constructed entirely in concrete. Sadly, Steiner never lived to see it; he made his transition in 1925, three years before the new building was completed.

The esoteric teachings of Rudolf Steiner are difficult to characterize. While they resemble the trans-Himalayan teachings, there are important differences between the two. Aside from the issue of the Venus Chain (or Sun Evolution), Steiner—along with Max Heindel, founder of the Rosicrucian Fellowship—portrayed Christ as a Sun Spirit who had never before incarnated on Earth. By contrast, the trans-Himalayan teachings present Christ as a high initiate of the human family who incarnated as Krishna before his appearance in Palestine. Also, Steiner’s prophecy of the incarnation of Ahriman is difficult to reconcile with the reappearance of the Christ, externalization

of the Planetary Hierarchy, and emergence into the Aquarian Age. Steiner’s contributions to the arts, education and agriculture may eventually be recognized as more significant than his esoteric teachings. That said, his teachings continue to attract a large body of ardent disciples.

The western esoteric tradition recognizes three levels of initiation: “clairvoyant,” “initiate” and “adept.”¹³ Steiner never claimed to be an adept, but his ability to see and comprehend the hidden worlds firmly identifies him as an “initiate.” Where he stood on the initiatory path described in the trans-Himalayan teachings cannot be ascertained. Steiner had a Pisces Sun, but, since his birth date and time are uncertain, his rising sign is a matter of conjecture; one source gives it as Scorpio. The same source lists “Mercury and Neptune in Pisces conjunct; Moon and Saturn in Virgo; Venus in Aquarius; Mars conjunct Pluto in Taurus; Uranus in Gemini.”¹⁴

By whatever standard, Rudolf Steiner was a great man, who dedicated his life to important philosophical, social, and cultural endeavors and left an indelible mark on esotericism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Contributed by John F. Nash, and dedicated to his late wife Sylvia Lagergren, a long-time student of Rudolf Steiner’s teachings.

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- ¹ Photo of Rudolf Steiner in the Public Domain.
² Christoph Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner, a Biography* (Great Barrington, MA: Steinerbooks, 2012), 3.
³ Rudolf Steiner, *The Story of My Life*, ch. 20. Online: <http://www.southerncrossreview.org/55/steiner-life20.htm> (last accessed Feb. 19, 2016).
⁴ Interestingly, Besant laid most of the blame for the secession, not on Steiner himself, but on the Jesuits! See Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner*, 370-371
⁵ Hella Wiesberger, "Preliminary Remarks, II," to Rudolf Steiner, *"Freemasonry" and Ritual Work* (Great Barrington, MA: SteinerBooks, 2007), 144.
⁶ See for example Rudolf Steiner, *An Outline of Occult Science 20/e* (Spring Valley, NY: Anthroposophic Press, 1961/1972), 111ff.
⁷ Rudolf Steiner, *The Fifth Gospel, from the Akashic Record* (Forrest Row, UK: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1995). The book is a compilation of lectures given in 1913.

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- ⁸ Rudolf Steiner, lecture, October 12, 1911, Karlsruhe, Germany.
⁹ For an in-depth discussion of the two Jesus children see: David Ovason, *The Two Children* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 2001/2010).
¹⁰ John F. Nash, "Ahriman and Lucifer in the Teachings of Rudolf Steiner," *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Fall 2013), 37-60.
¹¹ The Christian Community, Movement for Religious Renewal. Online: <http://www.thechristiancommunity.org/about/the-new-service/> (last accessed Feb. 20, 2016).
¹² Quoted in Lindenberg, *Rudolf Steiner*, 599.
¹³ John F. Nash, "Themes in Western Esotericism," *The Esoteric Quarterly* (Fall 2014), 17-45.
¹⁴ Source: <http://www.makara.us/04mdr/01writing/03tg/bios/Steiner.htm#interp> (last accessed Feb. 20, 2016).

Book Review

***Moving Beyond Duality: Enough for Us All, Volume Three*, by Dorothy I. Riddle.** iUniverse, 2015. Paperback, 292 pages, Publisher's price US&\$20.99.

Debates about monism versus dualism or duality versus non-duality have haunted philosophers through the ages. In her new book, *Moving Beyond Duality*, Riddle sidesteps this debate, shifting the focus instead to our actual reality—the “surging sea of energy of which we are all equally important parts...the One Life.” She reminds us that our cosmos is not the static mechanistic model depicted by Newtonian physics but rather a dynamic interconnected whole, and that viewing it as a series of dichotomies leads to separateness, depersonalization, and ultimately violence.

As the Ageless Wisdom suggests, these thought-forms of separateness (the great heresy), built by humanity during the ages, are kept alive by our choice and are “to be broken up and dissipated by humanity itself.”¹ A first step in dissipating them is understanding because “the moment there is knowledge and a flash of understanding, that moment a person's responsibility begins.”² And the goal is redemption: “Humanity itself will be the world savior.”³ This sense of responsibility and service underpins *Moving Beyond Duality*.

This volume is the third part in the trilogy, *Enough for Us All*. Volume One (*Principle of Abundance for the Cosmic Citizen*) and Volume Two (*Positive Harmlessness in Practice*) were previously reviewed by *The Esoteric Quarterly*. Like them, *Moving Beyond Duality* is a thorough, well-researched and approachable project that sagely weaves examples from a variety of fields, from social sciences and life sciences to quantum physics, neuroscience and the Ageless Wisdom teachings. In addition, as with the previous two volumes, this one includes practical and tested exercises designed to help readers apply concepts in their everyday lives. The aim of the author is to help us

reconsider the way we distort and limit experience by imposing upon reality our unconscious habits of thinking—thought-forms and illusions that create and reinforce duality. One of the points Riddle has been arguing in her books is that we live in the world oblivious to the abundance of Life. This limits our perception of possibilities and generates a fear of scarcity. When instead we recognize that there is “enough life for us all,” this focus on abundance precipitates a shift toward joy.

How is this to be achieved? One of Riddle's primary concerns here is with speech or how we name our experience. At the lower or concrete mind level, human thought is framed by speech, so this is a main area for intervention. Either/or thinking translates into the way we perceive and construct reality, the codes we use to designate groups and the laws societies implement. Speech can create barriers to social interaction. Think of a time someone failed to recognize aspects of yourself, for example your credentials in a field, or projected prejudices on you based on how they perceived your background or social identity (“you are this” usually means “you are not that”). In such cases we might, at best, feel misunderstood, probably judged and perhaps misrecognized too. At worst, we might be the target of bullying or segregation or even become socially invisible.

The book title itself is insightful. It denotes action, evolution towards the future. To be able to live more lovingly and contribute the energy of harmlessness to the world, we need to move beyond duality in thought, in speech and in action. In fact, in the Ageless Wisdom tradition, the power of separative thought-forms is such that it has been described as “a gigantic” entity, an unyielding entity that “hovers over the entire human family”⁴. The result of such thought-forms, Riddle suggests, is that we depersonalize others, overlooking their unique Soul purpose and seeing them only through stereotypic categories or in terms of how useful they are to us.

Until we experience this urge to reflect, we may not be aware of embedded dualities in how we describe our spiritual experience: body/soul, spirit/matter, higher self/lower self, and so on. Many times the problem is not the words per se but how we get attached to certain meanings. We tend to use dichotomies to describe what is actually a continuum because that reduction is easier to grasp. While words might be important to distinguish levels and provide a sense of direction, we should keep in mind that the map is never exactly as the more complex territory it describes.

Recognition of habitual patterns of thinking is the first step towards change, but it is not enough. Once existing negative thought-forms have been recognized, we should destroy them and replace them with thought-forms that heal cleavages and support right human relations. What can aid us is to achieve this is guidance regarding where we go dualistic, and then support to think differently. Clearly, no book can do this for us. We have to do it on our own, day after day. However, a book can provide us with the tools to move in the direction of creating a more empathic world, and this book does that. It encourages us to effect a shift towards a non-dualistic approach to life. It reminds us that “relationship and connectedness define us—whether by their absence or their richness.” We, human and nonhuman beings alike, are all part of One energy field that is the One Life, and within this field we can learn to cherish our diversity. We contribute more to the One Life when we are grounded and remember the spiritual center at the heart of each being. When we are not grounded, we apply dualistic thought mechanically and come to believe that it represents reality. However, Riddle reminds us that:

Actually, duality is *not* a given. It is a construct, a low-effort conceptual framework we use to make sense of our experience and of our complex universe. It is an assumption that we make, a habit of thinking or perceiving that we have collectively accepted as reality. It feels true because we create two-category distinctions (either/or) so frequently. We forget that *we* are the ones who create the categories. *We* are the

ones who choose to limit those categories to two.

Moving Beyond Duality is structured in three parts. Part One (*The Habit of Duality*) examines why we have developed patterns of dualistic categorization. It explains the limits imposed by our working memory and the problems created because we are continually reworking memories. It shows us how we use distortions to simplify our choices and then avoid responsibility for change. This section also delves deep into the origins of illusion by examining four pillars of inaccurate and outmoded Newtonian physics that continue to influence our worldview: materialism, reductionism, determinism and objectivity.

Part Two (*Recognizing Depersonalization in Action*) explains and exemplifies the actual harm created by the illusion of duality and the resulting practice of depersonalization. This is not an easy read for the emotional type. We could argue that Riddle is more concerned with dealing with illusion, a strictly mental plane problem, than she is with glamour, a more emotional level problem. Both are part of our experience as humans, but readers who are mentally focused will probably more readily resonate with the book’s aim of dismantling illusion. This process necessitates of an act of the will. Riddle not only demonstrates minutely and clearly how *hostile* bigotry dehumanizes human beings, but she also provides dozens of illustrations of the dangers of *benevolent* bigotry, stereotyping, dismissiveness and objectification. She includes in her examples not only violence against humans but also that against non-human persons, and of course self-inflicted harm in thought, speech, emotion and action.

Finally, Part Three (*Moving Beyond the Dualistic Model*) effectively teaches the reader a number of strategies and exercises to embrace and live our interconnectedness, including practice in reframing our experience through noticing, feeling, and acting. There is also an emphasis on developing the Intuition as a means of revealing Oneness. Although structured esoteric training would be needed to approach such a goal, the exercises in this

chapter prepare the reader to move a step closer in that direction.

Riddle's authority in the field is unquestionable. A doctorate in clinical psychology, a social change specialist, a researcher and a prolific author, Riddle has been for decades involved in fostering equality and dignity among social groups. She was a founding member of the Association for Women in Psychology and conducted early research on homophobia, resulting in the creation of the influential Riddle Scale and, later on, the co-development of the Employment Readiness Scale™. Simultaneously, Riddle grew as an Ageless Wisdom writer and teacher. She has served the School for Esoteric Studies for years as advisor and now as Chairperson of the Board of Directors, and has published dozens of articles, including several in *The Esoteric Quarterly*.

This, her most recent book—and hopefully not the last—comes at the right time, a moment of unprecedented global crisis that is questioning the meaning of exclusionary boundaries. This is clear in the increasing awareness and confrontational public debate regarding the refugee crisis, the push to stop domestic violence

against women, and accelerating legal actions regarding the personhood of animals. This book resonates with the equally loud cry for freedom and an end to poverty and all manifestations of the horrifying illusion of “us” against “them” that has historically engendered violence.

This book is one of the many loving seeds being planted everywhere in human consciousness to help subvert illusionary boundaries and open up our heart to Oneness.

Miguel A. Malagrecia
Turin, Italy

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- ¹ Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (1925; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), 948.
 - ² Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. II, (1936; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1979), 236
 - ³ Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, (1957; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1976), 539.
 - ⁴ Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (1925; reprint; New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1973), 948.