1. 'Must I Remain Silent?' A Life of Rudolf Steiner

'I'm going South to-night to the magicians.'
'You had much better not, Rudolf', said someone. 'A few quiet hours in Puritania with me would be better for you – much better.'
– C.S. Lewis, The Pilgrim's Regress
('Rudolf Steiner' and 'Immanuel Kant')[1]

Rudolf Steiner's *Autobiography*[2] has been given only one heading, a cry from his heart: 'Must I remain silent?' From about the age of forty this Austrian, a trained scientist from peasant-turned-proletarian origins, began to reveal his spiritual vision to occult circles in Berlin. He was far from silent in the last part of his life, the first quarter of this century. He became a charismatic leader, casting a spell on many. His deep eyes were impressively large in a thin, sensitive face which became increasingly lined. He had a full head of dark hair and often dressed in an unusual way: frequently he would don a fully flowing cravat. Physically short, a primal power seemed to many to well up from within him. As a result, cultivated speakers of *Hochdeutsch* were not put off by his outlandish German, the dialect of eastern lower Austria. What had this man to be silent about?

He was convinced that he was directly in touch with the 'spirit-world'. This struck him as immediate reality. The sense realities that make up everyday life for most tended to pass him by. However, he did not undergo a dramatic, God-given revelation. He was a highly gifted intuitive, a riddle whose feet were on ground of his own. Steiner attempted to find certainty through a lifelong inner development of wrestling with philosophical and spiritual problems. This development is a model for Anthroposophists today and so is a vital part of their identity. It is also essential background to both the history and cosmology of the movement he founded.

Rudolf Steiner's spiritual experience was not one of usual prophecy. The prophet is struck by a terrible and holy ultimate he generally calls 'God'; typically, it appears to come from outside him. This numinous kind of experience, where it becomes the basis of a new religion or sect, is frequently different from a mystical or 'esoteric' outlook. Examples include orthodox Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism (to a lesser extent), Mormonism and the Unification Church. These tend to have a strong social order and generally do not encourage contemplation; knowledge of God is typically deferred to after death and salvation is closely associated with prescriptive ethics. Though the prophet may come from most social backgrounds, any religion that develops around his experience tends to cater for the needs of the mass of people at a time of deep-seated change. Fundamentalist religion in our 'post-modern' period locates itself through looking back, often to a prophetic founder. Prophets generally challenge the contemporary status quo and in return are persecuted. No wonder many have tried to avoid the call to bear witness.

Thus Zoroaster wrote: 'To what land shall I go to flee, whither to flee? From nobles and my peers they sever me, nor are the people pleased with me, nor the Liar rulers of the land.'[3] The great Hebrew prophets endured tribulation: they emerged preaching from Jahweh cult centres, which were an alternative Jewish establishment to the typical Middle Eastern despotism of kings like Solomon. The historical Jesus suffered a terrible, isolated end. Muhammed, experiencing Allah, was terrified that he was going mad; later, virtually isolated, he was forced to withdraw from his native Mecca to Medina. Guru Nànak (1469-1539) does not seem to have suffered persecution, but his founding message was more synthetic (of Hinduism and Islam) and mystical than prophetic. The institutionalisation of contemporary Sikhism, which resembles prophetic religions, arose out of the trials and tribulations of the Sikhs in the Punjab since the time of Nànak, their first guru. Joseph Smith, who claimed that his *Book of Mormon* was derived from golden plates given to him by an angel, found it necessary to travel away from the 'Gentiles' of the East Coast of America to the wilds of Utah. The fabulously wealthy 'Reverend' Moon protected himself in his Korean stronghold, but the force of his conviction, the result of the energy of the revelation that assailed him, has led to thousands of people giving up conventional identifications.

Had Rudolf Steiner had usual prophetic experience, the cry from his heart would probably have been, 'How can I avoid speaking?' rather than, 'Must I remain silent?' God did not appear to him

through a terrible burning bush or its equivalent. Instead it was Steiner who was burning to end the spiritual isolation to which the development of his intuition had led. Contemplatives generally seem to be much less persecuted than prophets. Rather than preach to the masses with a message that confronts the powers that be, and which is radically different itself, they usually have a more conservative appeal, recruiting those of relative education and wealth (however universal the intentions). Contemplatives find an oceanic truth within or through the self, generally in a gradual, tolerant way. They tend to describe the ultimate as ineffable, with a pantheistic feel, rather than define it as a specific creator God who is self-existent.

Steiner's revelation is contemplative, not theistic, using the senses of the words defined above. His essential cosmological idea is that the world hardened from spirit and that its destiny is to become spirit again. As microcosms with free will, human beings are central to the redemption of the cosmos from an over-hardness of matter. The head of the Goetheanum serpent described at the end of the Prologue is identified with original macrocosmic spirit. Anthroposophists strive to leave materialism and egocentric individualism behind and to develop larger spiritual identity instead. The pattern of the serpent can be interpreted as both underlying and existing within the meanings of Anthroposophical social life.

Steiner saw spiritual development as the meaning of the evolution of the world. The condensation of the cosmos into matter has, in the Anthroposophical view, enabled this development of consciousness to begin. But the result is currently some separation between increasingly significant consciousness and the macrocosm. Perhaps this is why the serpent in the Goetheanum has a very large eye and does not touch the tail it encloses in its mouth.

Contemplatives with approaches resembling Steiner's have been well regarded within the general social status quo during their lifetimes. Upanisadic contemplatives, the Hindu élite, have been highly respected in India for their secluded search for *brahman* or the Absolute. The Buddha attracted much goodwill from fellow nobles as well as others. It was the privileged mercantile class that seems to have provided most support for early Buddhism and Jainism, which was founded by Mahāvira who, like the Buddha, was the son of a chief. His asceticism was extreme given that he died through voluntary self-starvation (the rite of *sallekhana*), but he was not persecuted by others. The philosophical idealism of Plato was the thought of a socially well-insulated, authoritarian contemplative who rejected the demotic in his own Athens. Even Kabbalism,

Neoplatonism and Sufism − minority contemplative traditions within the commanding orthodoxies of Judaism, Christianity and Islam − have been precariously tolerated by these prophetic traditions.

Why then did Rudolf Steiner, who wanted to tell of his experience, feel constraints? If contemplatives, unlike the generality of prophets, are often tolerated by most of their contemporaries, why should he have written his heartfelt, 'Must I remain silent?' Part of the reason seems to have been that acclamation by a few people and an absence of active persecution are not the same thing as understanding and acceptance by the educated and cultivated. Steiner's charismatically expressed philosophical and spiritual position was close to, if not over the boundaries of, contemporarily perceived stigma. Were Steiner alive today, more of an immediate bridge of understanding might be found through the contemporary discovery of 'synesthesia', the unusual experiencing of one kind of sense impression alongside another.

Also, Steiner was impelled towards action. He did more than share his intuitions with a trusted few. He inspired, though the educational form of lectures, an active social organism with many applications, and centred this around a sacred building. It is no detraction from his benign achievement to point out that this energy, as with many other leaders, might have been linked to another characteristic which has often carried something of a self-perceived stigma: physical shortness. Indeed, from an Anthroposophical point of view, Steiner would before birth have chosen the most appropriate physical body for his mission.

Steiner was claiming far more than many mystics who attempt to convey or suggest the ineffable through feeling. He believed in carrying clear and defined ideas into the soul. From his intuition he gave answers to just about every question that can be asked. He wrote that this was not a cold process and that he experienced a flood of warmth as a seer. He is considered to be an occultist because he described things that are normally unknowable or hidden, and yet he claimed virtual inerrancy.

The social pressures for silence were also increased because he was alive during the development of our modern era, an age when dismissal or reduction of the spiritual has generally been the dominating moral and intellectual force. This, in an epistemological more than experiential sense, was frequently the attitude of the people he seems to have met most: intellectuals, writers and artists. In a time of philosophical materialism Steiner was not a mere vague mystic, but from a very spiritual point of view rejected Darwinian

orthodoxy. He also offended the long inherited tradition of Western culture, given that Christian orthodoxy was based on the suppression of gnosticism and Manicheism. No wonder Steiner had difficulties in finding people who could understand.

Here was a man who earnestly needed to press his perceptions on others. Was he a fraud? The probity of many other occultists such as 'Madame' Blavatsky or Gurdjieff was much doubted by contemporaries. However, there seems to have been no significant suggestion that Steiner was consciously dishonest. Admittedly, his Anthroposophy is structurally similar to Western gnosticism and doctrinally often closely resembles contemporary systems of thought, notably Theosophy; yet Rudolf Steiner stated that everything Anthroposophical derives from his own, original spiritual research. But by itself this does not make his revelation necessarily mistaken, let alone dishonest. Cultural relativism has been a modern pointer to nihilism and seers such as Steiner have fought against it.

The firm sense perception that normally consolidates during childhood and youth only seems to have developed for him when he was thirty-five. As will be seen, this correlates with the Anthroposophically significant age of thirty-five, when the fifth seven-year period of development starts, and also with the cosmological middle period in Anthroposophy when spirit solidifies. His inner world seems to have included spiritual intimations which most people leave behind in childhood or even infancy: as an adult he had direct access to spiritual experience with his scientifically trained and philosophically knowledgeable mind. He would probably have had no difficulty with the present consensus among psychologists that we perceive the world indirectly through physiological mechanisms, so that what we see 'out there' is really a sort of predictive description. Steiner's distinctiveness comes rather in his belief that he had demonstrated the falsity of the assertion that concepts (as contrasted with percepts) are subjective. He held the spiritual activity of thinking to be absolute. He took it as much for reality as naive realists do the sense world. It was thus that he concluded 'spiritual science' was possible.

Steiner would sometimes refer to himself impersonally to emphasize his belief in the objectivity of his spiritual research. He believed that his spiritual path was entirely independent of his emotional life, which he kept private. He did not agree with psychologism, the view that intuitions deriving from introspection are only subjective, consciousness of these being located entirely within the skin and not at all in the world. For him, the spiritual activity of thinking, or living consciously within thoughts, is both within the skin and out

in the world. Unlike many modern intellectuals, Steiner did not give out a sense of experiencing himself as essentially set apart from his environment. It was of his cosmic consciousness that he so needed to speak.

His *Autobiography* was written in instalments while he was on his deathbed. Perhaps this is why its initial clarity seems to become more defensive and rambling. Other autobiographical sources date from after the time he broke his silence. Descriptions of his early life by others are rare or unidentified. The sketch here, which very largely focuses on his formative experiences, is necessarily based on his later descriptions of his earlier development. Even taking this scarcity of early information into account, it can be said that the life of this unusual man certainly had a strongly heroic aspect. However, it has tended to be uncritically transformed into legend or myth by adoring followers. His many attractive personal qualities, such as geniality and humour, are often idealized to the point that the Anthroposophical biographies have been hagiographies.[4]

What is *not* stated is highly informative. Steiner scarcely mentions the erotic, nor in a psychological vein does he scrutinise his microcosmic self for the darkness he attributes to his macrocosmic demons, Ahriman and Lucifer. Bringing in issues such as these is not the only way that the interpretation here, which from an Anthroposophical point of view comes from an undeveloped consciousness, differs from hagiography. This book mentions thoughts which insiders have not widely publicised: for example, Rudolf Steiner seems to have believed that he was the reincarnation of Eabani, the consort of the hero of the Assyrio-Egyptians.[5] Also, though Steiner believed in seven-year growth periods[6] in which the individual human being recapitulates the evolution of the macrocosm, this framework does not seem to have been adopted by biographers writing about Steiner's own growth. Anthroposophists do not consider it legitimate to attempt to do so, apparently because he himself did not link his own biographical experience to his revelation.

The eminent psychiatrist Anthony Storr in a work on gurus, *Feet of Clay*, suggested the presence of narcissism in that 'even ostensibly humble gurus like Rudolf Steiner retain grandiose beliefs in their own powers of perception and their own cosmogonies'. He also wrote that Steiner, though neither suffering from paranoid schizophrenia 'nor being psychotic in the sense of being socially disabled' shares 'certain characteristics with patients whom psychiatrists would designate as paranoid'. In the DSMIV 'this diagnosis would now be Delusional Disorder: Grandiose Type'. But otherwise he described

Steiner as a mild, gentle, good, kindly man of high ideals and high intelligence who inspired other people and who certainly did far more good than harm.[7] The modern medical model disqualifies vision which is unevidenced by sense perception, and, as described, qualifies from a sense-based (or positivist) perspective the traditional saying attributed to Jesus: 'by their fruits shall ye know them'. 'Pure' vision, even of a contemplative kind, is perceived by many to be pathological unless and until it becomes culturally controlled and licensed. For those who consider the psychological outlook described above to be reductionism and who yet wish to retain and develop contemporary psychological diagnostics, Steiner might be interpreted as having characteristics in common with a positive form of schizotypal personality.

The First Seven Years (1861-1868)

Rudolf Steiner's *Autobiography* is interesting because his mother is not described, except for a dutiful reference to her loving care for her children. There is not even a passing mention of (for example) her finely drawn features or her oval, sensitive face. Was mother earth lacking from the beginning? Perhaps this had something to do with why, as will be seen, older maternal women were to figure prominently in Steiner's adult life.

There is a sense of dislocation. Like many leaders, his origins were culturally marginal. His translated writings state that his birthplace, Kraljevec, which is now in Croatia and near Hungary, was 'far distant from the corner of the earth to which I rightly belong'.[8] He was surely affected by his feeling that his family should be elsewhere:

> Both my mother and father were true children of the glorious Lower Austrian forest district north of the Danube. . . . My parents loved the memories of their native region. When they spoke about it one felt that although destiny caused them to spend the better part of their lives far from that district, their hearts were still there.

Their roots were in the peasantry. His father (1829-1910) and paternal grandfather had been gamekeepers for a Count von Hoyos-Sprinzenstein. His mother (1834-1918),[9] who came from a family long settled locally in the Horn area, had been a servant in the count's household. The still-feudal count forbade marriage between the pair, whereupon they eloped. Steiner's father was just in his thirties when he suddenly broke out into a newly industrialised world. He was

employed for very low pay as a telegraphist, then as a stationmaster, on the new Austrian Southern Railway, the latest technology in the Hapsburg Empire.

Rudolf Steiner was born just after this 'emancipation' from the land. The probable effect on him was considerable. In the deepest sense he identified with the rhythmic nature associated with his peasant forbears; but the railway, telegraph and machines seem to have aroused his talent for science and conceptual thought. This contrast was brought home by his parents' sense of dislocation. The great influence of the early years of life is more widely believed in today than it was when Steiner wrote his *Autobiography*, and as a responsible eldest child, Steiner had an earlier and sole exposure to the stress of their change. His sister Leopoldine and brother Gustav were three and five years younger respectively. During his first three or four years the child Rudolf, for whom contact with the sense world outside was to be so little preferred, moved twice with his parents. They were transferred from Kraljevec to another station for a short while and then yet again were moved to the station at Pottschah, an Austrian village near the Styrian Alps, where they remained for five years. It was on the mountainous, beautiful Semmering line, a contemporary technological marvel; the stationmaster's house, though, was makeshift rather than designed for settled living. It was also cut off from the traditional village community.

Rudolf Steiner was to become convinced that he had chosen his parents and their dislocated situation while he was in the spirit world waiting to be born. His karma, so he came to believe, was to act as a spiritual guide to the modern age, to lead sceptical modern man to a true perception of the spiritual within and beyond him. In thus reflecting, Steiner did not allow space for a psychological interpretation of his youth, but instead interpreted it cosmically, in terms of destiny and reincarnation.

In later life, though he was aware of the early works of Freud and Jung, he never psychologised his sense of cosmic mission. From a general psychodynamic (Freudian and Jungian) perspective he could be interpreted as never having lost his sense of infantile omnipotence, as never having gained a Kleinian depressive position of realistic acceptance. The potential opposition between psychological and spiritual interpretations is manifest. It is, however, the aim here to draw attention to the psychological perspective without thereby being dismissive of the spiritual. Though from a psychological perspective Steiner may have had inner 'splits' partly related to an original feeling of helpless disconnection, his extraordinary

spiritual energies were surely also in keeping with his innate temperament. He fought courageously and with humanity for what was most essential to him, the paramountcy of spirit, against the ascendancy of what his near contemporary, the poet Yeats, called 'this filthy modern tide'.

Steiner describes in his Autobiography his much-mentioned, much-loved father, with whom he greatly identified; sympathetically, humorously and with sadness. He felt him to be working out of a sense of duty only, so that life became monotonous, punctuated only by outbursts of temper and essentially absurd political arguments. The railway had contracted him in both senses of the word: it had become a life-denying force. However, it was from this background that his son was to develop a life-affirming spiritual science of the organic. Around him the linearity of the rails and telegraph wires were linked to the cycle of the seasons on the Styrian mountains, such as the Schneeberg, which rose gently out of a green landscape. As a child Steiner accepted technology only so long as it seemed to have that inner reality from which his father had become alienated.[10] In this sense, he as the eldest of the Steiner children was living through and attempting to resolve his father's problem. Thus he was happy with a local mill where he was made welcome, but antagonised by a nearby textile factory, whose manager cast a veil of mystery over what was hidden within its walls. Later, this outlook became philosophical: he was strongly to oppose Kant's assumption that the 'thing-in-itself' cannot be known.

His *Autobiography* is overwhelmingly concerned with the gradual development and deepening of his spiritual life. In his childhood he had an awareness, analogous to the animism of primitive peoples, of 'Beings' within mountains and trees. He felt he lived clairvoyantly with the 'spirits of nature' after an important childhood experience (which he did not date). A relative seemed to enter the waiting-room, saying, 'Try now and in later life to help me as much as you can'.[11] Then he learned that the relation had killed herself at the same time that he had 'seen' her. This, as much else, may or may not have been a screen memory: that is, an apparent memory which was really created by his mind at a later date (in this case, 1913). Revealingly, he also stated that he was silent about what he saw because he feared ridicule from his family. The boy was not in a social reality where he could break through the separation between his inner life and the world (as represented by his family) by talking about his spiritual experiences. A double life was developing. It was only much later that his pent-up spiritual energies burst upon the world.

Seven to Fourteen (1868-1875)

This highly intelligent and perhaps lonely and unhappy boy found a route to development when he discovered the abstract purity of geometry.

> That one can work out forms which are seen purely inwardly, independent of the outer senses, gave me a feeling of deep contentment. I found consolation for the loneliness caused by the many unanswered questions. To be able to grasp something purely spiritual brought me an inner joy. I know that through geometry I first experienced happiness.
>
> In this early relation to geometry I recognize the first beginning of the view of the world and of life that gradually took shape within me. In childhood it lived in me more or less unconsciously; by my twentieth year it had assumed a definite, fully conscious form.[12]

Geometric shapes and forms enabled Rudolf Steiner's extraordinarily gifted spirit to rise above subjectivity. By the time he was a youth he began to identify with literary equivalents of geometry, Lessing, Goethe and Schiller, who were introduced to him by a doctor who frequently travelled on the railway. This may have influenced Steiner's later decision, in early middle age, to leave his native Austria to work in the Goethe Archives at Weimar.

His background had some similarities to being a son of the manse because he was an outsider, yet had contact with all kinds of people. Indeed, it was growing up in such close proximity to the station and its travellers that enabled Steiner to encounter the doctor-passenger who opened his mind to German literature. Perhaps the doctor was even a model for some of Steiner's more unusual characteristics: the doctor once had a railway employee stand on the platform with his tongue out so that he could have a look while travelling past on a non-stop train, and telegraphed a diagnosis from further up the line. Steiner was from the start of his life aware of distant destinations making all types of people converge on the station. At Pottschah, it had even rivalled the church as a centre, as country folk and local worthies such as the school master, the priest, the accountant from the estate, and often the burgomaster came to greet that modern wonder, the steam engine, on the few occasions that it stopped.

The marginal nature of Steiner's younger years was not limited to the distinctiveness of his station homes. He also started living on the edge of one of the bitter nationalist divisions in the disintegrating Austria-

Hungary in which he grew up. When he was seven the family moved to a small village called Neudorfl, just outside Austria, in Hungary, after his father was appointed stationmaster there. This meant that the young Rudolf Steiner, at a time when his social awareness was beginning to form, became highly conscious of the tensions between Austrians and Hungarians. The energetic pro-Magyar patriotism of a local priest was to remain in his mind throughout his life. Steiner was filled with aversion by the flatness of Hungary stretching away to the East, and was sad that his beloved Styrian Alps were now in the distance.

Steiner's *Autobiography* displays a stoical humour (perhaps a psychological defence or denial), and because of this his pain at being rejected by the village children, as when they barred him as a newcomer from a traditional nut collection game, can only be guessed at. Furthermore, the stationmaster's house, his home, was set above the village proper, being separated from it by some land and the local church. Left to his own devices, he had many chats with the adult villagers, whom he describes as basically children themselves. He does not identify friends of his own age until his university years, though he writes that he had many companions at school as an adolescent. His sister and brother, who were probably too young and different to have interested him, are also hardly mentioned. The main stated influences on his childhood and youth were adult and male.

His father, whom he greatly imitated in his early life, was a freethinker. Perhaps this was why the son was little affected by priestly instruction, though he found meaning in Catholic ritual and music. As has not been uncommon in Catholic cultures he was generally unimpressed by the local clergy, especially with a nearby monk who had fathered children.

Schoolmasters were to influence him more and more (later, his spiritual science was to be organised around 'lessons' and 'classes'). Steiner had decided that he wanted to become a teacher himself. Uniquely for his village, at the age of eleven he won a place at the technical *Realschule* in the neighbouring town of Wiener-Neustadt, now an industrial centre. Education was making him a different kind of person from the remainder of his poor, newly proletarian family. It seems even to have cut him off from his intelligent father, who had decided that his son's future lay with the railway. The gap between the village school and the *Realschule* was great, but by the age of fourteen Steiner had striven so much that he was listed as a pupil of excellence.

Fourteen to Twenty-one (1875-1882)

During these years, Steiner later stated, the essential question was 'To what extent is it possible to prove that what is active in human thinking is really spirit?'[13] 'A "subject matter" that remains outside thinking as something one can only "reflect upon" was to me an unbearable idea. I was convinced that the actual *reality of things* must enter into one's thoughts.'[14] Mathematics was a foundation for this.

This questioning was separate from his schoolwork, even though he performed very well and identified with many of the masters. When he was only fifteen, he read Kant surreptitiously in a boring history class whose teacher, nevertheless, awarded him the grade 'excellent'. He also studied the philosopher in the little spare time he had. Steiner commented later that he had not noticed how much their convictions conflicted. From his school he absorbed strict scientific method and a mechanistic model of nature. But this, and even geometrical drawing, about which he was very enthusiastic, seem not to have affected him as much as the education he provided for himself. He was an unusual pupil because of his deep-seated predicament, the division between his paramount intuitive reality and the sense world. With his increasingly philosophical cast of mind he understood this as a conflict between spirit and the scientific materialism then in its heyday. When he was about eighteen he let go of the claims of the latter.

It happened when he rewrote Fichte's *Science of Knowledge* in order to clarify his own ideas.

> Formerly I had been at pains to find concepts, applicable to the phenomena of nature, from which one could derive a concept of the 'I'. Now my goal was the opposite: starting from the 'I' I wanted to penetrate to the creative processes in nature. Spirit and nature stood before my soul in all their contrast. I experienced a world of spiritual beings. That the 'I', itself spirit, lives in a world of spirits, was a matter of direct perception for me. But I could not reconcile the physical world with the spiritual world I experienced.[15]

He did not rebel against the tough external conditions of his life but worked dutifully and very hard. There was the vegetable garden to cultivate. This was no irrelevance: supper during his childhood consisted simply of a piece of bread and butter or cheese. Travelling to and from school took up to three hours a day. According to his sister Leopoldine he would be in fear of gypsies and often up to his knees

in snow struggling with heavy books. No doubt, despite the absence of a 'youth culture', many of the other pupils at the *Realschule* tasted whatever illicit delights there were in Wiener-Neustadt. There is no suggestion of anything of the sort in Steiner's *Autobiography,* though he states that he was always of a sociable disposition. For him the best the town seemingly had to offer was a visit to the doctor who was introducing him to German thought. He was also engaged tutoring contemporaries at the *Realschul*e so that he could contribute money to his hard-up parents.

The railway company eventually transferred father and family to Inzersdorf, a suburb of Vienna, expressly so that Rudolf Steiner could commute to and from the city's *Technische Hochschule* (Technical College). He won a scholarship to study mathematics, natural history and chemistry. His *Autobiography,* which describes his childhood only perfunctorily, now starts to mention warm friendships. It states that his student companions generally followed 'the ideal', which they could not reconcile with actuality, and often had tragic endings. Steiner was elected chairman of the students' German Reading Room. Of great importance was his friendship from his first year with a lecturer in literature, Karl Schroer, whose dedication to Goethe influenced him enormously.

During his commuting Steiner made friends with a simple, mystical countryman, Felix Kogutski, who sold herbs in the city. Steiner saw him as special, as a healer who used 'atavistic' (i.e. unconscious) clairvoyance. 'Gradually it seemed to me as if I were in the company of a soul from bygone ages who, untouched by civilization, science and modern views, brought me an instinctive knowledge of the past.'[16] He was the model for 'Felix Balde', a character in the mystery plays Steiner wrote much later. In 1958, villagers who were questioned recalled 'Felix', as he is known to Anthroposophists, much more banally: they did not consider him to be special.[17]

Steiner informed[18] the French occultist Edouard Schuré that at about this time in his life he had been 'initiated' by the 'M'. Anthroposophists say they do not know who 'M' was. The impersonality and the letter are reminiscent of the Tibetan 'Masters' who supposedly communicated with the Theosophical Society founder Helena ('Madame') Blavatsky. (Later in his life, as we will see, Steiner's 'Anthroposophy' was to break away from the recently created Theosophical Society). 'M', like Felix, was anti-clerical, but unlike him taught a conscious clairvoyance. Strong, masculine and using the terminology of Fichte, he advocated 'slipping into the skin of the dragon', the spirit of the materialistic modern age, in order to understand it and so overcome

it. As Steiner later wrote that he had not found inner truthfulness in Viennese Theosophy, 'M' perhaps was not a follower of this spiritual movement. 'M' − if he was of flesh and blood − may have followed a more Western path, particularly a revived Rosicrucianism, as the movement named after Christian Rosenkreuz is termed (the history of these spiritual identities is outlined in part three). The term 'M' is also reminiscent of the mythical 'Book M' of Christian Rosenkreuz over two centuries earlier, and indeed, Steiner saw Anthroposophy as a spiritually complete Rosicrucianism.

Twenty-one to Twenty-eight (1882-1889)

At this time an 'esoteric' revival was beginning to sweep North America and much of Europe. Steiner probably first encountered Theosophy through a book in 1884;[19] as he states that he deplored this book, he presumably read it. His *Autobiography* perhaps protests too much in denying the influence of Theosophy on him during his Vienna years: an influence can be effective without being consciously accepted.

About twenty years later Steiner's 'independent spiritual research' would come up with findings that were strikingly similar to Theosophy's. The idea of karma is one example. He believed he could perceive reincarnation spiritually before he met Theosophy, a perception which had been stimulated by his adolescent reading of Lessing. The previous 'epochs' of the earth, such as 'Lemuria' and 'Atlantis', are other similar findings (for these, see chapter six). He was probably much more conscious of what he rejected in Theosophy, especially towards the end of his life, once his Anthroposophy had severed all connection with Blavatsky's movement.

Theosophy and especially Western 'esotericisms' such as Rosicrucianism and Kabbalism have cosmologies whose structures have resemblances to the pattern of the Goetheanum serpent which was described towards the end of the Prologue. The circling serpent corresponds to a circling cosmology in which matter has fallen from spirit, but will, at least to some extent, be restored to its former state in a new way. This circling structure is generally not analyzed and so made explicit; rather, it lives as the poetical, mythic cohesion for the particular doctrines of the esoteric synthesis in question. For example, the 'Hyperborean' and 'Lemurian' epochs are explicit Anthroposophical teachings, but the hardening or falling of the latter from the state of the former is part of the more implicit, serpent-like structure. It was probably during his Vienna years that Rudolf Steiner, perhaps at an implicit level, thoroughly absorbed this circling pattern.

However, it seems to have been in his early Anthroposophical years that he consciously worked out, or 'spiritually researched', his fully spiritual, descending, cosmic evolution in which man is macrocosmic (this is the subject of chapters five and six).

This evolutionary pattern corresponds closely to his personal dilemma. He saw with his intuition how the minds of people like his father had become more and more materialistic and cut off from life and meaning. Against modern tendencies, Steiner was opposed to the development of individualism and complexity where connection is severed from thought: that is, in Steiner's meaning, severed from direct experience of the spiritual world. In an English literary setting this loss of connection is analogous to Wordsworth's lines: 'Shades of the prison house begin to close upon the growing boy'. Steiner, in combating this (in esoteric terms) 'microcosmic' process, could hardly have failed to connect it with the macrocosmic fall into the world symbolized by the serpent. The redemption of or from the world, the circling-back pattern of the serpent towards its tail implicit within Western esoteric systems, surely was a model for action.

His immediate concern in Vienna was to 'slip into the skin of the dragon'. This involved understanding contemporary science. He was wrestling with current evolutionary theory, especially that of Haeckel, the materialist enthusiast for Darwin, and exploring ways of reconciling it with his spiritual perception. He became an expert on Goethe's imaginative, holistic science, which he saw as a bridge between the spiritual and material worlds. His aim was to show how matter is, when perceived truly, an offshoot of spirit. Thus he was engaging with the dualism of his perception, the disconnection between his intuition and his sense-awareness. He felt he could hint of this to others, but not speak fully. It was only much later that the hermetically sealed retort in which his thoughts were bubbling came apart. Rudolf Steiner had learned how to keep his own counsel after he had written to a former teacher stating he could follow a former classmate who had died into the spiritual world. He was much shaken by the lack of any reply.

At the early age of twenty-two he was entrusted with editing Goethe's writings on natural science as part of an edition of *Deutschen Nationalliteratur* ('German National Literature').[20] The furthest he decided he could openly go in opposing the materialist thinking of his time was to advocate the contrasting philosophy of objective idealism. This, inwardly, he saw as the cloak of spiritual knowledge. He would openly say that man would be pitiable if he could not find fulfilment within an independent world of ideals, but needed help from external nature instead. This thinking developed

into his seminal book *The Philosophy of Freedom*.

Steiner's problematic adjustment to the world was not just sensory, it was also social. Edouard Schuré later observed that Steiner had an extreme, empathetic and feminine sensibility.[21] Anecdotes of his younger years are also telling, as when Friedrich Eckstein, a factory-owning Theosophist, described how the young man used the informal *du* inappropriately and generally 'did not know a thing'. This is can be explained in part by his 'upwardly mobile' emergence into the middle-class Vienna of the 1880s. Steiner may well not have noticed his merely social *faux pas.*

There is a similar unearthliness about Steiner's love life. He recounts an early 'beautiful friendship' with a girl who 'had something of the archetypal German maiden about her'.[22] His erotic feelings are never mentioned, in relation to this encounter or elsewhere, but he does state that the image of her was frequently to stir within him. The shy soulfulness of this encounter was in contrast to the contemporary medical world's naming of sex as a diagnostic cause, a background for the psychoanalysis to come. (Indeed, Ellenberger, writing in relation to continental European medical contexts, stated that by the 1880s 'Victorian hypocrisy' was mostly a thing of the past).[23]

The youthful 'beautiful friendship' seems to have been succeeded by an attraction to maternal figures. While living with his parents and family Steiner was made welcome by Herminie, the maternally natured wife of his literature lecturer, Karl Schroer, at their home. On the latter's recommendation he became a resident tutor, thus leaving his own family. From 1884 he taught the four sons of Ladislaus Specht, a Jewish businessman who lived in Vienna. Steiner grew close to Pauline Specht, their mother. Later in his life, in Weimar, he was to lodge with Frau Anna Eunicke, a widow eight years his senior who had also had a large family. After this, he lived in Berlin, for a short while in utter misery in lodgings, and then moved in under Anna Eunicke's roof and married her. It seems likely that she moved first to Berlin and he followed.[24]These older, maternal women played a major part in Steiner's life until around the time he spoke publicly about his Anthroposophy.

Until he was about thirty, tutoring was Steiner's livelihood. Much of his twenties was spent tutoring the Specht children. He was now perhaps able to enjoy the childhood play he had missed. Steiner was moved by a spirit of altruism to give extraordinary understanding and arduous care to the 'sleeping soul' of one of the children, who had water on the brain. The effort was enormously worthwhile: the boy became a doctor of medicine. From this and other tutoring experiences

germinated Anthroposophical education, including the curative, and Steiner's thinking on the nature of man. Had Steiner compromised with materialism and 'come' to his senses in a psychiatrically approvable way, Anthroposophy, including the high quality of its caring, could hardly have come into being. Perhaps his early death might also have been prevented, for in part he was to become a totem sacrificed to the needs of his devotees. In contemporary Western culture, permeated as it is by psychotherapy and counselling, someone now placed as Steiner was then might come to understand themselves as personally 'split' and needing to integrate the elements of their experience.

Steiner presumably felt it would be inappropriate to speak about his spiritual awareness to Dr Breuer, Freud's collaborator, on the occasions when the former discussed medical subjects with Frau Specht. Nor did he go as far as he could have done at the 'almost magical'[25] Saturday evenings held by the pessimist poetess Marie delle Grazie. The discussions, which were held under a red-shaded ceiling lamp, were on cruel, senseless, overpowering nature. Steiner said it was no sunny illumination but always sombre moonlight, with threatening, overcast skies. Still, he greatly enjoyed these encounters with his despairing anti-Goethean opposites. In other groups, where people were more in accord with him, or in famous Viennese coffee-houses, such as the Griensteidl-kaffee, he found gaiety and illumination, as well as the usual warmth and friendliness. But even in this company he did not confide his inner state, that taking shape within him was what has been translated as 'a spiritual vision of the world of living truth'.[26]

Through a leading Theosophist, Maria Lang, Steiner became friendly with the harmonious and well-known author-to-be Rosa Mayreder, who has been described as expressing all that was best in the woman-steeped aestheticism of Vienna.[27] She thought Steiner did not pay enough attention to the physical world. Through her he met architects whose ideas probably influenced his later designs, including those for the two main Anthroposophical sacred buildings, the 'Goetheanums' (the first one was burned down in 1922).

Vienna developed Steiner's cordial and sociable traits. Through living in the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire he became involved in its twilight, though not as a partisan Austrian nationalist. In 1888 he tried to bring a more spiritual impulse even into journalism and politics through briefly editing a weekly, *Die Deutsche Wochenschrift*. It is very likely that Steiner would have had more readers if, instead of his spiritual perspective, he had one-sidedly identified either with the interests of the ruling class or with the social utopianism of Marxism.[28]

Twenty-eight to Thirty-five (1889-1896)

Through the influence of Karl Schroer, Steiner, now an expert in the recondite area of Goethean science, was invited to Weimar, the 'Goethe-city', to edit nearly all the morphological part of Goethe's natural scientific writings for the Weimar Sophia edition. Rudolf Steiner left Vienna for Weimar when he was twenty-nine and never lived in his native Austria again. In the *Autobiography*, which describes his life in Weimar at great length, he called this transition the end of the first chapter of his life.

He maintained in Weimar the difficult silence about the spiritual beings he saw, the breaking of which he believed was the end of the second chapter of his life. Meanwhile, sense-perception continued to give him problems:

> I had to observe natural objects repeatedly in order to be able to identify them. . . . The external world really appeared to me somewhat shadow-like or picture-like. It moved past me like pictures whereas my relationship with the spiritual always had the character of concrete reality. . . . My inner world was really separated from the outer world as if by a thin wall. . . . It was as if I had to cross a threshold when I wanted to have intercourse with the outer world.[29]

During these years, spiritualist séances were much more prevalent than they are now. Steiner seems not to have been involved in séances, but nevertheless mentions how on two occasions he had had experiences of second sight in connection with women with whom he was or was to be emotionally involved. He thought he was in contact with the spirit of the man who, when alive, had been most important to them. The first was the recluse father of the 'archetypal German maiden' he loved. Even though the two had never met, Steiner (while he was living in Vienna) gave his funeral address. He thought that, again in a non-spiritualistic way,[30] he was close to the spirit of the also-reclusive late husband of his Weimar landlady and wife to be, Anna Eunicke. Again, Steiner had never met him.

Outwardly, life was relatively easy. Steiner entered into the minds of numerous interesting people with great warmth and insight. As already stated, he was lodging with Frau Anna Eunicke and her family. In 1891 he found a Platonist professor (at Rostock University) who accepted his doctoral thesis.[31] There is much in the *Autobiography* about the ferment of ideas in the high culture of Weimar which, through the amiable patronage of Grand Duke Karl Alexander,

was dedicated to the memory of Goethe and Schiller. The Goethe Archives where he worked were a point of intersection for scientific, artistic and courtly circles. Though Steiner was not in accord with the dry philologists there, he also knew people who wanted to live in the present, the 'Liszt-era'. He mixed with a Nietzschean circle[32] and had interesting discussions with the feminist writer Gabrielle Reuter.

Despite the cultural atmosphere of the Goethe Archives, in spirit Steiner seems to have felt acutely alone. Trying to understand his predicament in universal terms, he spent much energy empathizing with and distinguishing himself from well-known contemporary thinkers. He was chilled by a meeting with the famous philosopher Edouard von Hartman, whom he felt did not inwardly listen but instead maintained that mental pictures by their very definition contain no reality. A meeting sought by Haeckel led to a comment in Steiner's *Autobiography* much later, that Haeckel's materialist ideas were possessed somewhat fanatically by an interest pursued in a former life on earth, in particular by a strong desire which had been related to Church politics. Seeing Nietzsche prostrate during his illness, Steiner felt profound empathy, believing that such a fine soul's acceptance of scientific materialism had inevitably led to tragedy (syphilis as a specific cause was not mentioned). The *Autobiography* states: 'In inner perception I saw Nietzche's soul as if hovering over his head, infinitely beautiful in its spirit light, surrendered to the spirit worlds it had longed for so much but had been unable to find before illness had clouded his mind.'[33]

Thirty-five to Forty-two (1896-1903)

When Steiner was thirty-six he left Weimar for Berlin. It seems that Anna Eunicke was already there. Fending for himself during his last year at Weimar, he found his sense perception was improving.

> I was aware that I was experiencing an inner transformation of soul-life which normally occurs at a much earlier age. . . . I found that the reason that people grasp neither the physical nor the spiritual world in their purity is because at an early age a transition takes place in the soul's existence: from being bound up with spiritual life it comes to experience the physical. Henceforth the physical sense-impressions are unconsciously mingled with the inner impressions of the world of spirit used in forming mental pictures.[34]

Steiner could perhaps have accepted and attempted to increase the mingling between his spiritual and recently improved sense

perceptions, but he remained true to the unusual self he knew, his spiritual self. Though his awareness of matter had improved, it remained separate. Analogously his cosmology, which was quite soon to be revealed by him, was to reject hard physicality as gross or 'abnormal' and to perceive dense matter as a temporary aberration.

Given that the development of sense perception in childhood is generally an involuntary process, its development in Rudolf Steiner at mid-life put him in a most unusual situation. It perhaps gave him more need to communicate because the sense-world became more real. 'Must I remain silent? . . . At every turn I met the problem: how can I find the way to express in terms understandable to my contemporaries what I inwardly perceive directly as the truth?'[35] Keeping his own counsel still, in that he was not expressing his intuitions, he linked up with Anna Eunicke in Berlin.

Here, in the sophisticated metropolis of the Germany recently united by Bismarck, he moved in Bohemian circles. This change from the salons of Weimar reflected his inner state: in 1898 he was undergoing a dark crisis. The hard matter he had put aside was tempting him in the form of philosophical materialism while around him was a nightmare experience of an unreal city, a vision of the modern metropolis anticipating T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* and the dark vision of modernity in W.B. Yeats' *The Second Coming.* Steiner preserved himself from this abyss by accepting a spiritual foundation, a highly esotericised Christianity, which became the axis of his spiritual thought.[36] Recovering in 1899, he no longer lived alone in the capital, for he and Anna Eunicke became husband and wife.

Soon after his wedding to Anna Eunicke he began to break his silence. This proved to be a very challenging issue. Probably the secularised sophisticates found him comical and the aesthetes felt him to be a puzzle. Steiner perceived that the metropolitan literary minds he encountered were unaware that their destinies and his were karmically linked. Was Frank Wedekind, the famous dramatist, aware of how Rudolf Steiner regarded his hands? '*Such* hands! In a previous earthlife they must have accomplished things possible only for someone capable of letting the power of his spirit stream into the finest ramifications of his fingers'.[37]

Steiner once gave a spiritual address before an experimental production of a play (*L'intruse*) by the idealist writer, Maeterlinck, but the aesthetic listeners seem to have remained mere dabblers in the spirit. The readers of a literary journal, the *Magazin fur Literatur*,

which Steiner edited were unenthusiastic about his spiritual glimmerings (anything more explicit their editor knew he could not include). He had more success teaching history for the Workers' Educational Association, but his contract was not renewed when the management realised quite how un-Marxist he really was. There was, however, a tribute to his rhetorical and, presumably, charismatic powers when in 1900 he was entrusted with an address to 7,000 typesetters.

Thus Steiner explored far and wide in frustrating attempts to bring others to a preliminary cognition of the spiritual. Sooner or later, though, it was likely he would encounter the potential following that existed, those who indeed were avid for a spiritual leader with his sense of mission. In August 1900, he had accepted an invitation from Count and Countess Brockdorff to speak on Nietzsche to an audience that included Berlin Theosophists. Invited again, this time he gave a fully 'esoteric' lecture on Goethe's well-known *Fairy Tale*.[38] In this company he was highly valued: his social dramatisation arising out of his need to communicate and perhaps justify his spiritual perception was here representative, whereas in more conventional circles it was stigmatised as exaggerated. Steiner discovered that the only way he could break his silence was to return to the kind of Theosophical milieu that he had encountered years ago in Vienna. The spiritual energy that he had for so long restrained began to well up from within. In 1902 he became the effective leader of German Theosophists. As most came to depend on him as a charismatic seer, his spiritual identity was increasingly confirmed and reinforced.

Through lecturing to Theosophists, Rudolf Steiner met Marie von Sievers, his esoteric partner and second wife-to-be, a year after marrying Anna Eunicke. Not only was Marie von Sievers six years younger than he, she was also esoteric and formidable. She came from a noble German-Baltic background and had been brought up in Warsaw, Riga and St Petersburg. She owned the Theosophical headquarters in Berlin, and at some point she and Steiner lived together in her apartment in this house. She looked up to Steiner, who had quite suddenly transformed into a charismatic leader, as the ultimate spiritual authority. From the end of 1903 Steiner and von Sievers were inseparably together at the centre of Berlin Theosophy, and in 1914, three years after the death of Anna Eunicke, Steiner and von Sievers would marry. His silence was utterly finished and there was nothing now to check his destined end.

The Anthroposophical Years (c. 1903-30 March 1925)

Though this chapter is concerned with the life of Rudolf Steiner, the information here also introduces the history of the movement as a whole.

Steiner's need to bring others into his esoteric world was much tempered by his liberalism and ethic of individuality. His social blueprint of the Threefold Commonwealth could, however, be considered spiritual Napoleonism. Steiner's face, the dark eyes becoming increasingly contrasted with lines and hollows, became quite well known in Wilhelminian Germany. Silence transformed into magnetic monologue. In all, he gave 5,965 lectures, the great majority in his Anthroposophical years.

The foundation of his spiritual movement was, in a sense, a triumphant vindication that in itself has brought immortality. In the first decade of the last century Steiner was mainly concerned with developing his own 'esoteric' synthesis.[39] Before and during the First World War he established Anthroposophy as a separate organisation, breaking away from Theosophy.[40] He also gave 'indications' for the development of artistic activities. From about 1913 he was designing and building the (first) Goetheanum, the central sacred building of Anthroposophy, in Switzerland. It was at this watershed time that he married Marie von Sievers. After the First World War he was largely concerned with the social applications of Anthroposophy. Apart from the time of armed conflict, he travelled widely in Europe, unflaggingly speaking evening after evening.

His influence was at its peak in the despair of post-First World War Middle Europe. Indeed, he presented Emperor Charles and other doomed hereditary rulers of his native Austria-Hungary and Germany with a social utopia, the Threefold Commonwealth (see chapter four). Though his childhood supper had consisted only of a slice of bread and butter, Rudolf Steiner's blueprint had no Marxist tinge. It and he were well publicised. An appeal based on it attracted many non-Anthroposophical signatures, including those of numerous professors, Gabrielle Reuter and Hermann Hesse. However, the Threefold Commonwealth had no influence on the political structures which followed the war.

Later, disaster struck. On New Year's Eve, 1922, the Goetheanum was set on fire. Throughout that terrible night Steiner was a model of fortitude. Then, after a display of spiritual disillusionment with his followers, he dedicated himself to the renewal of the Anthroposophical movement, laying the foundation stone for a new

Goetheanum. This '1924 Foundation event' was of great importance to the society because it was only at this stage that Steiner formally joined it. Anthroposophically, it is perceived as Steiner connecting his personal destiny to members, his recognition that the teacher should get entangled in worldly things, and a model for how development continues to the end, even when it comes to a seer's incarnation. In terms of sociological theory about charismatic leadership, it is, as will be seen, an example of the 'routinisation' (i.e. social embedding) of charisma. In terms of a biography of the human being it could also be understood as a step forwards in Steiner's attempts to integrate himself with the problematic sense world.

Once Steiner had broken his silence to Berlin Theosophists, he was a public man. He was desperately needed for revelations, for charismatic leadership. His thoughts about the nature of man and the ascending evolution of the cosmos towards the heights of spiritual realisation were elaborated in the first decade of the new century. As described, he believed his 'findings' (arrived at by spiritual research) were uninfluenced by similar ideas he was aware of through his conventional knowledge of Theosophy and contemporary thinking generally. These beliefs in the inerrancy of his intuition, like his earlier adoption of Christianity, perhaps enabled him to shut out from his spiritual self the forces he identified as the spirit's great opponents – materialism, or Ahriman, and chaotic, passionate fancy, or Lucifer.

Steiner appears to have become more and more insulated from the outside world as he acted upon his sense of heroic mission. Though he seems to have retained a few old friends, the generality of the intellectuals, writers and artists he had known were in a different world. Within Anthroposophy he had little private life: even his relationship with Marie von Sievers was in part at least a kind of externalized alchemical marriage for followers, in that it was a public, spiritualised relationship. Sexuality exercised a covert influence in his later career, through the perceptions of others. In 1906, he and Marie von Sievers led an esoteric society associated with sexual magic. Furthermore, he has been depicted as spiritually polygamous because he told a woman follower, Dr Ita Wegman, that a very ancient karma existed between them. Though this revelation might have been made for the sake of Anthroposophical cohesion, it was to have the opposite organisational effect through triggering later conflict between Dr Wegman and his widow.

His followers needed to idealize him. Steiner became omnipotently convinced that he was not only inspired by the Rosicrucian esoteric

tradition but also by intangible 'Nordic', 'Hibernian' and 'Celtic' streams. As Anthroposophy grew around him, his social environment increasingly reflected back to him the uniqueness of his spiritual identity. Steiner seems in part to have been the prisoner of the expectations he satisfied. The more he developed the movement, the more the needs of members, exacerbated by his self-punishing sense of duty hemmed him in, day in, day out. His dilemma about remaining silent continued in the sense that he still felt unable to speak about what they could not understand. He also felt constrained by followers to talk about some themes, such as the Gospels and the Bible, more than he intended. Despite or perhaps in part because of his use of exhortation and strong criticism, his personal life, including his marriage, seems to have been swallowed up by the followers who devoted themselves to him. His charisma in large part, though certainly not entirely, seems to have been conferred by the mass of his followers, their empty, hungry inner 'splitness' and consequent need to project and idealize. As will be discussed more fully in considering the growth of Anthroposophy as a social movement (chapter two), in terms of contemporary leadership theory Steiner's charismatic leadership can in part be understood through psychodynamic psychology. His charismatic, authoritative leadership was symbiotic with his followers' dependence and their projection of infantile, or early, needs and fantasies which, though individual and perhaps different for each person, tended to have the common characteristic of being accompanied with awe. Steiner's need to speak authoritatively and his followers' idealizing of him as one entitled to speak with authority seem to have fed into each other in a quickening spiral.

Herman Keyserling, another spiritual leader, accused Rudolf Steiner of having a 'tremendous lust for power',[41] but this does not seem to have been a common complaint. His power, and perhaps need for power as charismatic leader, were bounded by his own Anthroposophical ethics. The − perhaps relatively few − really unscrupulous leaders of cults attempt to increase their hold through making arbitrary and, especially, contradictory decrees. In this way followers are prised away from conventional restraint and depend more and more on the cult hero. Steiner, even if his need for power was strong, remained consistent in his spiritual science and behaviour.

Steiner died of an excruciating illness at the age of sixty-three on 30 March 1925. No conventional diagnosis was made generally available, though one was promised,[42] explaining why he suffered anew after each meal. By the time Marie Steiner had answered a

call to his bedside next to the burned out Goetheanum he was dead. It may be that he never thought that his illness, which started in the summer of 1923, would be terminal.

Steiner explained his illness by stating that in his spiritual life he had somehow lost connection with his physical body, though not with the physical world. He even said that it was precisely because in the spiritual and even in the physical world everything went on without the slightest error that the opposing powers were attacking his physical body (Perhaps because this was the only other route available).[43] For Steiner the way to handle Ahriman, the force of materialism, and Lucifer, the force of passionate fantasy, was explicitly to hold the middle ground. However, within the microcosm of Steiner himself, somehow the centre did not hold.