

InPresence 0012: Rudolf Steiner and Anthroposophy with Jeffrey Mishlove

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(00:37) Hello. I'm Jeffrey Mishlove. Today, I'd like to talk to you about an individual who has been a great inspiration to me, the Austrian mystic Rudolf Steiner. Steiner is the founder of the Anthroposophy movement, which is active throughout the world today. He was what one would have to call a polymath, in the very broadest sense. He was a creative genius in many, many, many different areas.

(01:11) He developed, for example, one of his many contributions, an art form known as eurythmy, in which one takes the spoken word of poetry and expresses it through both voice and movement at the same time. So, it's like dance, it's not dance. It's like poetry, but it's more than poetry. It's like yoga, but it's different than yoga. The idea is to express through movement the etheric quality of the emotions and the words of the poetry. This is very unusual. People who express themselves through eurythmy can become quite magnetic and powerful, at least the ones that I've met.

(01:56) I was first exposed to Anthroposophy in 1968. It was an important part of my awakening to the realm of spiritual science. I remember, vividly, sitting in the cafeteria at the University of Wisconsin, in Milwaukee, where I was taking a summer course. A man walked into the auditorium and began passing out leaflets. I picked one up and read the phrase "spiritual science." At that moment, I had a mini kundalini experience. I felt shivers moving up and down my spine. That's only occurred a few times in my life, so I attended the lecture. In fact, as I recall, it was a weekend program and I got deeply engrossed. I confess, I'm not a follower. I never joined Anthroposophy, or any other movement of that sort. But, I was deeply moved by the work that they do.

(03:04) Now, Steiner, in addition to developing eurythmy, was a philosopher - a classically trained German philosopher. He worked on the Nietzsche archives, he worked on the Goethe archives. He wrote books about both Goethe and Nietzsche. He had written some 200 books and given some 6,000 lectures. The Rudolf Steiner Archives, which you can find simply through Google, maintains these and they are available for you - most are available online.

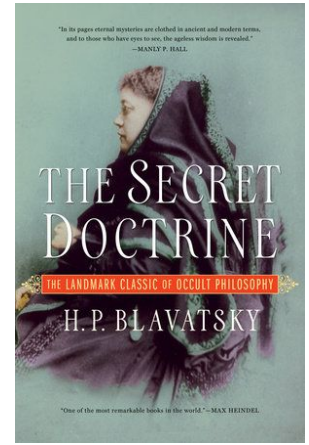
(03:45) In addition, he was an architect. You'll see here a picture of a building he designed. I think it was built around 1925, or shortly thereafter. He died in 1925. It was one of the earliest buildings using

the method of poured concrete. And you can see, the design itself is quite unique. Prior to that, there was a wooden structure. It was called the Goetheanum. It's the world headquarters of the Anthroposophy movement. Anthroposophy meaning the study of man, in the deep sense.

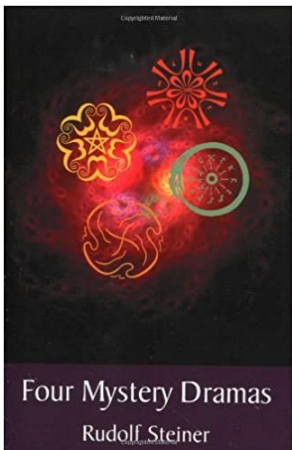


(04:24) Before he founded anthroposophy, Steiner was the head of the German branch of the Theosophical Society, founded by Madame Blavatsky.

The Theosophical Society drifted more and more toward Eastern thought, Buddhism, and eventually set up headquarters in India. Steiner was more oriented towards the Western mystical tradition and that's when he broke away from Theosophy and set up the Anthroposophical movement.



(04:58) He was quite a creative genius in his own right. He wrote plays that are performed today in the Goetheanum, which is one of the largest theaters. At least when I visited it back in the early 70's it was said to be the largest theater in Europe, outside of Moscow. The building has stained glass windows with a unique method of carving into the glass to create images of color and light, and that was developed by Steiner.

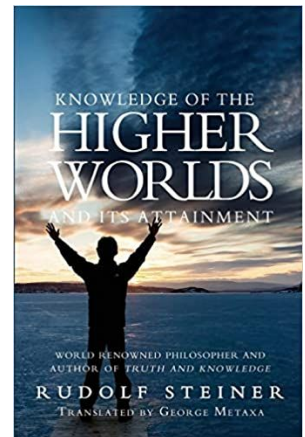


(05:34) He is also known as the father of biodynamic farming. He founded a system of education that is very active today, known as Waldorf schools. He developed systems of economics and politics. He actively contributed to visionary literature.

(05:55) I have referred to him in the very first segment of the "In Presence" series, because his book, *Knowledge of Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, was a big inspiration to me. Here, I am showing a watercolor painting done by Mulsby Kimball, who I met back in 1968 when he was the president of the

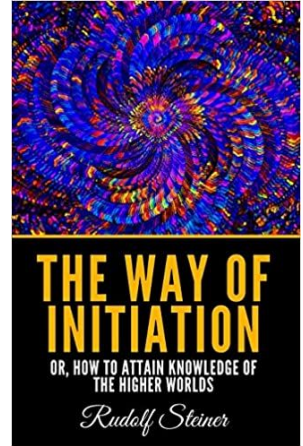


Anthroposophical Society in America, and [was] a fine painter in watercolor. This is a style of painting developed by Rudolf Steiner. It's called "Master and Disciples." It portrays a master, a spiritual master, working with disciples on the astral plane.

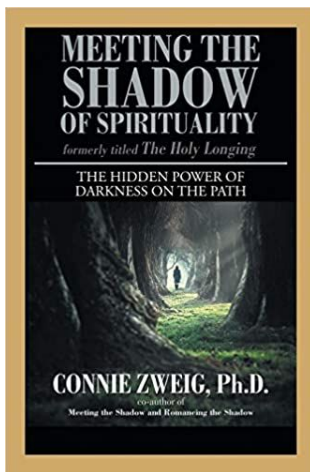


(06:43) Now, Rudolf Steiner also wrote about a process he called "initiation." I'd like to discuss that now. One might say initiation is a concept one can find both in Eastern and Western mystical traditions. In a previous segment of "In

Presence” on blocks to psychic functioning, I talked about how we have a difficult time taking in the pain of the world. We tend to numb ourselves so we don't have to experience the pain of the world. I also talked about Sigmund Freud’s great discovery that we don't even want to know about our own pain, our own suffering, our own feelings that are not consistent with the values of the larger society - our sexual and aggressive urges.



(07:41) So, when Steiner writes about initiation, he refers to what he calls having to pass through the guardian of the threshold. He says there are two of them: the lesser guardian and the greater guardian. One has to be spiritually and morally prepared for this. I think that’s especially why Steiner wrote that one should seek to take two steps toward ethics before taking one step toward knowledge or power. Because the confrontation with the guardian of the threshold is necessary in order to achieve spiritual initiation.



(08:24) Now, as I say, I’m not a follower of the movement. I’m certainly not an expert in some of the fine points of what initiation means to people in anthroposophy. But I do have my own take on it based on personal experience and study and it’s this: that in order to achieve an initiation, an opening up to these higher worlds, an opening up to one's own clairvoyant and psychic abilities, tuning in one might even say to the infinite, one has to confront one’s own shadow.

(09:00) To me, the guardians of the threshold are what we might think of as the Jungian shadow, our own dark side, both greater and lesser. Now, that's going to mean different things to different people.

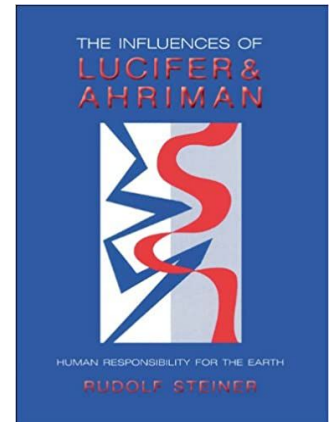
(09:17) I remember once, I visited the Rosicrucian Society in San Jose, California, where they have AMORC, one of the major Rosicrucian orders around the world. They have a wonderful facility there in an Egyptian temple. They showed me a little room where people go for spiritual expansion- one might even say, spiritual initiation. You sit and stare into a mirror. That's what it's about - so that you can see yourself more deeply. And I do think in these circumstances one confronts aspects of oneself that get pushed away that we don't want to look at. Maybe it's our selfishness, or even our tendency towards avarice or gluttony or greed or violence, anger.

(10:22) These things exist within all of us. In order for us to be able to take in the pain of the world, we have to look at our own pain. That, I think, is one of the lessons that I draw from Rudolf Steiner. But mostly what I draw from his is a great exuberance of creativity. He was a sculptor, an artist, a farmer, a developer of forms of medicine and education - an incredible example of what is possible in the human realm.

(11:01) Many anthroposophists believe that Steiner is the embodiment of the Nietzschean superman. I think they make a credible argument for that. One can look throughout history at other similar individuals. Now, Steiner claimed to be clairvoyant in many of his writings - of a visionary nature. He's certainly not a clairvoyant in the sense that parapsychologists would put him in a lab and test him for card guessing or remote viewing, although I have no reason to think he wouldn't be able to do that. But, that was never part of his path.

(11:42) He developed insights into the nature of Christianity, the nature of world spiritual systems. He founded a school of Christianity, as a matter of fact, that integrated, ironically, not just the Christian mythology but he incorporated into it Ahriman, one of the deities from the Persian Zoroastrian tradition.

(12:12) He wrote about Atlantis. He wrote about many esoteric subjects that I might, if I put on my critical hat, I might disagree with. But overall, I find Rudolf Steiner to be a very important beacon of light in the world. I'm very glad he lived and that he founded this movement which has grown to be stable and strong in the world.



(12:42) I'd like to leave with the thought about initiation. If you were to confront the greater or the lesser guardian of the threshold who would admit you into a realm of higher mystical and spiritual functioning, what do you imagine that might be like for yourself? I'll leave you with that thought. And thank you for being with me. (13:07)

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