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29 RUDOLF STEINER AND ANTHROPOSOPHY

ALL THROUGH his writing Steiner proclaims that he could never accept the sense-world as an ultimate. Physical perceptions are real enough and so are sense-data, and everyone can agree that thinking and systematic logic represent an analysis of situations and experience which can be more or less verified:

I wished to turn away from that road to knowledge which looked towards the sense-world, and which would then break through from the sense-world into true reality. I desired to make clear that true reality is to be sought not by such a breaking through from without, but by sinking down into the inner life of man. . . . When from within man sense-free thought comes forth to meet the sense-perception . . . the human spirit, living its own life within, meets the spirit of the world which is now no longer concealed from man behind the sense-world, but weaves and breathes within the sense-world.¹

This finding of the spirit within the sense-world is not a question of logical inferences or progression from sense-data. It is a further phase of man's evolution and so far much of the metaphysics of Steiner's analysis marches with the interpretations of Theosophy. For both an all-pervading principle pre-exists, or at any rate co-exists with and through, Creation. Life, and the human mind which is aware of life are transformed beyond matter by this manifestation of God. Man is able

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uniquely to test and experience this, according to Steiner, because evolution is not simply a process of natural selection with men as the most developed and adaptable of the animals:

It was a personal distress to me to hear men say that the material economic forces in human history carried forward man's real evolution and that the spiritual was only an ideal superstructure over this substructure of the 'truly real'. I knew the reality of the spiritual. The assertions of the theorizing socialists meant to me the closing of men's eyes to true reality.\(^2\)

This discovery of the spiritual by Steiner took a long time to form itself. He was born in 1861, the eldest of three children, in Kraljevec on the border between Hungary and Croatia to the wife of a minor official on the Southern Austrian Railway. The parents were Austrian Catholics, though the father went through a period of 'free thinking' in middle life. There is no evidence of an intense religious atmosphere in the Steiner home. When the time came to choose Rudolf's secondary-school training, his father decided that he should attend the Realschule rather than the Gymnasium as he wanted the boy to follow him in a railway career. The Realschule emphasized the sciences and Rudolf was grounded in physics, chemistry, and mathematics, especially geometry. His own interest and ability enabled him later to undertake the classical work of the Gymnasium.

In 1879 Steiner entered the Vienna Technische Hochschule, ostensibly continuing at the university level the science emphasis of the Realschule. By this time he had read and been fascinated by Kant's Critique of Pure Reason and had begun on Fichte's Wissenschaftslehre. He officially enrolled for mathematics, natural history, and chemistry and in fact carried these studies through but his primary interest was in philosophy and literature and he attended classes both in the Hochschule and the university, for he felt in duty bound to seek through philosophy for the truth. When he was nineteen he read Goethe's Faust for the first time, about fifty years after Goethe's final version of the work. Steiner found the unity of

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 104.