

Rudolf Steiner a true Christian Initiate was born: 25 February 1861 – died: 30 March 1925. He was a **Renaissance Man**, best known as an Austrian philosopher, social reformer, architect & esotericist. Steiner gained initial recognition at the end of the 19th century as a literary critic & published philosophical works including *The Philosophy of Freedom*. At the beginning of the 20th century he founded an esoteric spiritual movement, anthroposophy, with roots in German idealist philosophy & theosophy; other influences include Goethean science & Rosicrucianism.

In the first, more philosophically oriented phase of this movement, Steiner brought a synthesis between science & spirituality. His philosophical work of these years, which he termed "spiritual science", sought to apply the clarity of thinking characteristic of Western philosophy to spiritual questions, differentiating this approach from what he considered to be vaguer approaches to mysticism.

In a second phase, beginning around 1907, he began working collaboratively in a variety of artistic media, including drama, the movement arts (developing a new artistic form, eurythmy) & architecture, culminating in the building of the Goetheanum, a cultural center to house all the arts, in Dornach Switzerland.

In the third phase of his work, beginning after World War I, Steiner worked to establish various practical endeavors, including Waldorf education, biodynamic agriculture, & anthroposophical medicine.

Steiner advocated a form of ethical individualism, to which he later brought a more explicitly spiritual approach. He based his epistemology on Johann Wolfgang Goethe's world view. A consistent thread that runs from his earliest philosophical phase through his later spiritual orientation is the goal of demonstrating that there are no essential limits to human knowledge.

Steiner's father, **Johannes Steiner** left a position as a gamekeeper in the service of a Count in Lower Austria to marry one of the housemaids, **Franziska Blie**, which the Count had refused his permission. Johann became a telegraph operator on the Southern Austrian Railway, & at the time of Rudolf's birth was stationed in Croatia. The family moved to Pottschach, located in the foothills of the eastern Austrian Alps in Lower Austria, thru the promotion of his father to stationmaster.

One of Steiner's earlier spiritual experiences was when he was 9 years old; he saw **the spirit of an aunt** who had died in a far-off town asking him to help her at a time when neither he nor his family knew of the woman's death. Steiner later related that as a child he felt "that one must carry the knowledge of the spiritual world within oneself after the fashion of geometry ... for here one is permitted to know something which the mind alone, through its own power, experiences. In this feeling I found the justification for the spiritual world that I experienced ... I confirmed for myself by means of geometry the feeling that I must speak of a world 'which is not seen'

Steiner believed that at the age of 15 he had gained a complete understanding of the concept of time, which he considered to be the precondition of spiritual

clairvoyance. At 21, on the train between his home village & Vienna, Steiner met an herb gatherer, **Felix Kogutzki**, who spoke about the spiritual world "as one who had his own experience therein" Kogutzki conveyed to Steiner a knowledge of nature that was non-academic & spiritual, & prepared him to meet *Master M, the reincarnated Christian Rosenkrenz*.

During that time Steiner also studied **Kant, Fichte & Schelling**.

In 1879, the family moved to enable Steiner to attend the Vienna Institute of Technology, where he enrolled in courses in mathematics, physics, chemistry, botany, zoology, & mineralogy & audited courses in literature & philosophy, on an academic scholarship. One of Steiner's teachers, **Karl Julius Schröer**, suggested Steiner's name to **Joseph Kürschner**, chief editor of a new edition of Goethe's works, who asked Steiner to become the edition's natural science editor, a truly astonishing opportunity for a young student without any form of academic credentials or previous publications.

In 1888, as a result of his work for the Kürschner edition of Goethe's works, Steiner was invited to work as an **editor at the Goethe archives in Weimar**. As well as the introductions for & commentaries to 4 volumes of Goethe's scientific writings, Steiner wrote two books about Goethe's philosophy: '**The Theory of Knowledge Implicit in Goethe's World-Conception**' (1886), which Steiner regarded as the epistemological foundation & justification for his later work, & '**Goethe's Conception of the World**' (1897). During this time he also collaborated

in complete editions of the works of **Arthur Schopenhauer** & the writer **Jean Paul** & wrote numerous articles for various journals.

In 1891, Steiner received a **doctorate in philosophy at the University of Rostock**, for his dissertation discussing **Fichte's concept of the ego**, submitted to **Heinrich von Stein**, whose *Seven Books of Platonism* Steiner esteemed. Steiner's dissertation was later published in expanded form as **'Truth and Knowledge: Prelude to a Philosophy of Freedom'**, with a dedication to **Eduard von Hartmann**. Two years later, he published **'The Philosophy of Freedom or The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity'**, an exploration of epistemology & ethics that suggested a way for humans to become spiritually free beings.

In 1896, Steiner declined an offer from **Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche** to help organize the **Nietzsche** archive in Naumburg. Her brother by that time was non compos mentis. Förster-Nietzsche introduced Steiner into the presence of the catatonic philosopher; Steiner, deeply moved, subsequently wrote the book **'Friedrich Nietzsche, Fighter for Freedom'**. Steiner later related that:

"Nietzsche's ideas of the 'eternal recurrence' and of 'Übermensch' remained long in my mind. For in these was reflected that which a personality must feel concerning the evolution and essential being of humanity when this personality is kept back from grasping the spiritual world by the restricted thought in the philosophy of nature characterizing the end of the 19th century....What attracted me particularly was that one could read Nietzsche without coming upon anything which strove to make the reader a 'dependent' of Nietzsche's."

In 1897, Steiner left the Weimar archives & moved to Berlin. He became part owner, chief editor, & active contributor to the **literary journal Magazin für Literatur**, where he hoped to find a readership sympathetic to his philosophy. Many subscribers were alienated by Steiner's unpopular support of **Émile Zola** in **the Dreyfus Affair**, & the journal lost more subscribers when Steiner published extracts from his correspondence with anarchist **John Henry Mackay**. Dissatisfaction with his editorial style eventually led to his departure from the magazine.

In 1899, Steiner published an article, "**Goethe's Secret Revelation**", discussing the esoteric nature of **Goethe's fairy tale The Green Snake & the Beautiful Lily**. This article led to an invitation by the **Count & Countess Brockdorff** to speak to a gathering of **Theosophists** on the subject of Nietzsche. Steiner continued speaking regularly to the members of the Theosophical Society, becoming the **head of its newly constituted German section** in 1902 **without ever formally joining the society**. It was also in connection with this society that Steiner met **Marie von Sivers**, who became his **wife** in 1914. By 1904, Steiner was appointed by **Annie Besant** to be leader of the **Theosophical Esoteric Society** for Germany & Austria. In 1904, **Eliza, the wife of Helmuth von Moltke the Younger**, became one of his favorite scholars. Through Eliza, Steiner met Helmuth, who served as the **Chief of the German General Staff** from 1906 to 1914.

In contrast to mainstream Theosophy, Steiner sought to build a Western approach to spirituality based on the philosophical & mystical traditions of European culture. The German Section of the Theosophical Society grew rapidly

under Steiner's leadership as he lectured throughout much of Europe on his spiritual science. During this period, Steiner maintained an original approach, **replacing Madame Blavatsky's Eastern terminology with his own, & basing his spiritual research & teachings upon the Western esoteric & philosophical tradition.** This & other differences, in particular Steiner's vocal **rejection of Leadbeater & Besant's claim that Jiddu Krishnamurti was the vehicle of The Christ, which led to a formal split in 1912,** when Steiner & the majority of members of the German section of the Theosophical Society broke off to form a new group, **the Anthroposophical Society.**

The Anthroposophical Society grew rapidly. Fueled by a need to find an artistic home for their yearly conferences, which included performances of plays written by **Edouard Schuré** & Steiner, the decision was made to build a theater & organizational center. In 1913, construction began on **the first Goetheanum building, in Dornach, Switzerland.** The building, **designed by Steiner,** was built to a significant part by volunteers who offered craftsmanship or simply a will to learn new skills. Once World War I started in 1914, the Goetheanum volunteers could hear the sound of cannon fire beyond the Swiss border, but despite the war, people from all over Europe worked peaceably side by side on the building's construction. Steiner moved from Berlin to Dornach in 1913 & lived there to the end of his life.

Steiner's lecture activity expanded enormously with the end of the war. Most importantly, from 1919 on Steiner began to work with other members of the society to found numerous practical institutions & activities, including the first

Waldorf school, founded that year in Stuttgart, Germany. At the same time, the Goetheanum developed as a wide-ranging cultural center.

On New Year's Eve, 1922/1923, the building burned to the ground;

contemporary police reports indicate arson as the probable cause. Steiner immediately began work designing a **second Goetheanum building - this time made of concrete instead of wood** - which was completed in 1928, 3 years after his death.

At a "Christmas Foundation Meeting" 1923/24, Steiner spoke of laying a new **Foundation Stone** for the society in the hearts of the members. At the meeting, a new "**General Anthroposophical Society**" was established with a new executive board. At this meeting, Steiner also founded a **School of Spiritual Science**, intended as an "**organ of initiative**" for research & study & as "**the 'soul' of the Anthroposophical Society**". The School of Spiritual Science included meditative exercises given by Steiner.

Steiner became a well-known & controversial public figure during & after World War I. In response to the catastrophic situation in post-war Germany, he proposed extensive **social reforms through the establishment of a Threefold Social Order in which the cultural, political & economic realms would be largely independent**. Steiner argued that a fusion of the three realms had created the inflexibility that had led to catastrophes such as World War I. This led to his being publicly accused of being a traitor to Germany.

Steiner opposed Wilson's proposal to create new European nations based around ethnic groups, which he saw as opening the door to rampant nationalism. Steiner proposed as an alternative "'social territories' with democratic institutions that were accessible to all inhabitants of a territory whatever their origin while the needs of the various ethnicities would be met by independent cultural institutions."

The National Socialist German Workers Party gained strength in Germany after the First World War. They attacked Steiner & suggested that he was a Jew. In 1921, **Adolf Hitler attacked Steiner on many fronts**, including accusations that he was a tool of the Jews, while other nationalist extremists in Germany called for a "**war against Steiner**". That same year, Steiner warned against the disastrous effects it would have for Central Europe if the National Socialists came to power. In 1922 a lecture Steiner was giving in Munich was disrupted when stink bombs were let off & the lights switched out, while people rushed the stage apparently attempting to attack Steiner, who exited safely through a back door. Unable to guarantee his safety, Steiner's agents cancelled his next lecture tour. This led Steiner to give up his residence in Berlin, saying that if those responsible for the attempted coup, Hitler and others, came to power in Germany, it would no longer be possible for him to enter the country.

From 1923 on, Steiner showed signs of increasing frailness & illness. He nonetheless continued to lecture widely, & even to travel; especially towards the end of this time, he was often giving as many 5 lectures daily for courses taking

place concurrently. Many of these lectures focused on practical areas of life such as education.

Increasingly ill, he held his **last lecture in late September, 1924**. He continued work on his autobiography during the last months of his life; he died on 30 March 1925.

*** (many more details – a work in progress:)

Steiner first began speaking publicly about spiritual experiences & phenomena in his 1899 lectures to the Theosophical Society. By 1901 he had begun to write about spiritual topics, initially in the form of discussions of historical figures such as the mystics of the Middle Ages. By 1904 he was expressing his own understanding of these themes in his essays & books, while continuing to refer to a wide variety of historical sources.

"A world of spiritual perception is discussed in a number of writings which I have published since this book appeared. The Philosophy of Freedom forms the philosophical basis for these later writings; for it tries to show that the experience of thinking, rightly understood, is in fact an experience of spirit." ~Steiner, Philosophy of Freedom, Consequences of Monism

Steiner aimed to apply his training in mathematics, science, & philosophy to produce rigorous, verifiable presentations of those experiences. He believed that through freely chosen ethical disciplines & meditative training, anyone

could develop the ability to experience the spiritual world, including the higher nature of oneself & others. Steiner believed that such discipline & training would help a person to become a more moral, creative & free individual – free in the sense of being capable of actions motivated solely by love. His philosophical ideas were affected by Franz Brentano, with whom he had studied, as well as by Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, & Goethe's phenomenological approach to science.

Steiner used the term "spiritual science" to describe a discipline treating the spirit as something actual & real, starting from the premise that it is possible for human beings to penetrate behind what is sense-perceptible. He proposed that psychology, history, & the humanities generally were based on the direct grasp of an ideal reality, & required close attention to the particular period & culture which provided the distinctive character of religious qualities in the course of the evolution of consciousness.

Steiner proposed that an understanding of reincarnation & karma was necessary to understand psychology, & that the form of external nature would be more comprehensible as a result of insight into the course of karma in the evolution of humanity. Beginning in 1910, he described aspects of karma relating to health, natural phenomena & free will, taking the position that a person is not bound by his or her karma, but can transcend this through actively taking hold of one's own nature & destiny. In an extensive series of lectures from February to September 1924, Steiner presented further research on successive reincarnations of various individuals & described the techniques he used for karma research.

Steiner was founder and leader of the following Esoteric schools:

His **independent Esoteric School of the Theosophical Society**, founded in 1904. This school continued after the break with Theosophy but was disbanded at the start of World War I.

A lodge called **Mystica Aeterna within the Masonic Order of Memphis & Mizraim**, which Steiner led from 1906 until around 1914. **Steiner added to the Masonic rite a number of Rosicrucian references.**

The School of Spiritual Science of the Anthroposophical Society, founded in 1923 as a further development of his earlier Esoteric School. This was originally constituted with a general section & seven specialized sections for education, literature, performing arts, natural sciences, medicine, visual arts, & astronomy. Steiner gave members of the School the first Lesson for guidance into the esoteric work in February 1924. Though Steiner intended to develop three "classes" of this school, only the first of these was developed in his lifetime (& continues today).

After the First World War, Steiner became active in a wide variety of cultural contexts. He founded a number of schools, the first of which was known as the Waldorf school, which later evolved into a worldwide school network. **He also founded a system of organic agriculture, now known as biodynamic agriculture**, which was one of the very first forms of, & has contributed significantly to the development of, modern organic farming. **His work in medicine led to the**

development of a broad range of complementary medications & supportive artistic & biographic therapies. Camphill movement, are found in Africa, Europe, & North America.

His paintings & drawings influenced Joseph Beuys & other modern artists. His two Goetheanum buildings have been widely cited as masterpieces of modern architecture. One of the first institutions to practice ethical banking was an anthroposophical bank working out of Steiner's ideas; other anthroposophical social finance institutions have since been founded.

Steiner's literary estate is correspondingly broad. Steiner's writings, published in about forty volumes, include books, essays, four plays ('mystery dramas'), mantric verse, & an autobiography. His collected lectures, making up another approximately 300 volumes, discuss an extremely wide range of themes. Steiner's drawings, chiefly illustrations done on blackboards during his lectures, are collected in a separate series of 28 volumes. Many publications have covered his architectural legacy and sculptural work.

As a young man, Steiner was a private tutor & a lecturer on history for the Berlin Arbeiterbildungsschule, an educational initiative for working class adults. Soon thereafter, he began to articulate his ideas on education in public lectures, culminating in a 1907 essay on **The Education of the Child** in which he described the major phases of child development which formed the foundation of his approach to education. In 1919, **Emil Molt** invited him to lecture to his workers at

the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart. Out of these lectures came a new school, **the Waldorf school**.

In 1924, a group of farmers concerned about the future of agriculture requested Steiner's help. Steiner responded with a lecture series on an ecological & sustainable approach to agriculture that increased soil fertility without the use of chemical fertilizers & pesticides. Steiner's agricultural ideas promptly spread & were put into practice internationally & **biodynamic agriculture** is now practiced in Europe, North America, South America, Africa, Asia, & Australasia.

A central aspect of biodynamics is that the farm as a whole is seen as an organism, & therefore should be a largely self-sustaining system, producing its own manure & animal feed. Plant or animal disease is seen as a symptom of problems in the whole organism. Steiner also suggested timing such agricultural activities as sowing, weeding, & harvesting to utilize the influences on plant growth of the moon & planets; & the application of natural materials prepared in specific ways to the soil, compost, & crops, with the intention of engaging non-physical beings & **elemental forces**.

From the late 1910s, Steiner was working with doctors to create a new approach to medicine. In 1921, pharmacists & physicians gathered under Steiner's guidance to create a pharmaceutical company called **Weleda** which now distributes natural medical products worldwide. At around the same time, **Dr. Ita Wegman** founded a first anthroposophic medical clinic, now **the Ita Wegman Clinic, in Arlesheim**.

For a period after World War I, Steiner was active as a lecturer on **social reform**. A petition expressing his basic social ideas was widely circulated & signed by many cultural figures of the day, including **Hermann Hesse**.

In Steiner's chief book on social reform, '**Toward Social Renewal**', he suggested that **the cultural, political & economic spheres of society need to work together as consciously cooperating yet independent entities, each with a particular task: political institutions should establish political equality & protect human rights; cultural institutions should nurture the free and unhindered development of science, art, education & religion; & economic institutions should enable producers, distributors & consumers to cooperate to provide efficiently for society's needs**. He saw such a division of responsibility, which he called the **Threefold Social Order**, as a vital task which would take up consciously the historical trend toward the mutual independence of these three realms. Steiner also gave suggestions for many specific social reforms.

Steiner proposed what he termed a "fundamental law" of social life:

The well-being of a community of people working together will be the greater, the less the individual claims for himself the proceeds of his work, i.e. the more of these proceeds he makes over to his fellow-workers, the more his own needs are satisfied, not out of his own work but out of the work done by others.

He expressed this in the motto:

**The healthy social life is found
When in the mirror of each human soul
The whole community finds its reflection,
And when in the community
The virtue of each one is living.**

Steiner designed 17 buildings, including the First & the Second Goetheanum.

These two buildings, built in Dornach, Switzerland, were intended to house significant theater spaces as well as a "school for spiritual science". Three of Steiner's buildings have been listed amongst the most significant works of modern architecture.

His primary sculptural work is '**The Representative of Humanity**' (1922), a nine-meter high wood sculpture executed as a joint project with the sculptor **Edith Maryon**. This was intended to be placed in the first Goetheanum. It shows a central, free-standing Christ holding a balance between the beings of Lucifer & Ahriman, representing opposing tendencies of expansion & contraction.

Steiner's blackboard drawings were unique at the time & almost certainly not originally intended as art works. **Josef Beuys'** work, itself heavily influenced by Steiner, has led to the modern understanding of Steiner's drawings as artistic objects.

Steiner wrote four mystery plays between 1909 & 1913: The Portal of Initiation, The Souls' Probation, The Guardian of the Threshold & The Soul's Awakening.

Steiner's plays continue to be performed by anthroposophical groups in various countries.

In collaboration with **Marie von Sivers**, Steiner also founded a new approach to acting, storytelling, & the recitation of poetry. His last public lecture course, given in 1924, was on speech & drama. The Russian actor, director, & acting coach **Michael Chekhov** based significant aspects of his method of acting on Steiner's work.

Together with Marie von Sivers, Rudolf Steiner also developed the art of eurythmy, sometimes referred to as "visible speech". According to the principles of eurythmy, there are archetypal movements or gestures that correspond to every aspect of speech – the sounds (or phonemes), the rhythms, & the grammatical function – to every "soul quality" – joy, despair, tenderness, etc. – & to every aspect of music – tones, intervals, rhythms, and harmonies.

In his commentaries on **Goethe's scientific works**, written between 1884 & 1897, Steiner presented Goethe's approach to science as essentially phenomenological in nature, rather than theory- or model-based. He developed this conception further in several books, 'The Theory of Knowledge Implicit in Goethe's World-Conception' (1886) & 'Goethe's Conception of the World' (1897), particularly emphasizing the transformation in Goethe's approach from the physical sciences, where experiment played the primary role, to plant biology, where both accurate **perception & imagination were required to find the biological archetypes** (Urpflanze), & postulated that Goethe had sought but been unable to fully find

the further transformation in scientific thinking necessary to properly interpret and understand the animal kingdom. **Steiner emphasized the role of evolutionary thinking in Goethe's discovery of the intermaxillary bone in human beings;** Goethe expected human anatomy to be an evolutionary transformation of animal anatomy.

Steiner defended Goethe's qualitative description of color as arising synthetically from the polarity of light & darkness, in contrast to Newton's particle-based and analytic conception.

Steiner approached the philosophical questions of knowledge & freedom in two stages. In his dissertation, published in expanded form in 1892 as '**Truth and Knowledge**', Steiner suggests that there is an inconsistency between Kant's philosophy, which posits that all knowledge is a representation of an essential verity inaccessible to human consciousness, & modern science, which assumes that all influences can be found in the sensory and mental world to which we have access. Steiner considered Kant's philosophy of an inaccessible beyond ("Jenseits-Philosophy") a stumbling block in achieving a satisfying philosophical viewpoint.

Steiner postulates that the world is essentially an indivisible unity, but that our consciousness divides it into the sense-perceptible appearance, on the one hand, & the formal nature accessible to our thinking, on the other. He sees in thinking itself an element that can be strengthened & deepened sufficiently to penetrate all that our senses do not reveal to us. Steiner considered what appears to human

experience as a division between the spiritual & natural worlds to be a conditioned result of the structure of our consciousness, which separates perception & thinking. These two faculties give us not two worlds, but two complementary views of the same world; neither has primacy & the two together are necessary & sufficient to arrive at a complete understanding of the world. In thinking about perception (the path of natural science) & perceiving the process of thinking (the path of spiritual training), it is possible to discover a hidden inner unity between the two poles of our experience. For Steiner, it is paradoxically both an objective discovery & yet "a free creation of the human spirit, that never would exist at all if we did not generate it ourselves. The task of understanding is not to replicate in conceptual form something that already exists, but rather to create a wholly new realm, that together with the world given to our senses constitutes the fullness of reality."

In the Philosophy of Freedom, Steiner further explores potentials within thinking: freedom, he suggests, can only be approached gradually with the aid of the creative activity of thinking. Thinking can be a free deed; in addition, it can liberate our will from its subservience to our instincts and drives. Free deeds, he suggests, are those for which we are fully conscious of the motive for our action; freedom is the spiritual activity of penetrating with consciousness our own nature & that of the world, & the real activity of acting in full consciousness. This includes overcoming influences of both heredity & environment: "To be free is to be capable of thinking one's own thoughts – not the thoughts merely of the body, or of society, but thoughts generated by one's deepest, most original, most essential and spiritual self, one's individuality."

Steiner affirms Darwin's & Haeckel's evolutionary perspectives but extended this beyond its materialistic consequences; he sees human consciousness, indeed, all human culture, as a product of natural evolution that transcends itself. For Steiner, nature becomes self-conscious in the human being. Steiner's description of the nature of human consciousness thus closely parallels that of Solovyov.

In his earliest works, Steiner already spoke of the "natural and spiritual worlds" as a unity. From 1900 on, he began lecturing about concrete details of the spiritual worlds culminating in the publication in 1904 of the first of several systematic presentations, his '**Theosophy: An Introduction to the Spiritual Processes in Human Life and in the Cosmos**'. As a starting point for the book Steiner took a quotation from Goethe, describing the method of natural scientific observation, while in the Preface he made clear that the line of thought taken in this book led to the same goal as that in his earlier work, *The Philosophy of Freedom*.

In the years 1903–1908 Steiner maintained the magazine "**Lucifer-Gnosis**" & published in it essays on topics such as initiation, reincarnation & karma, & knowledge of the supernatural world. Some of these were later collected & published as books, such as '*How to Know Higher Worlds*' (1904/5) & '**Cosmic Memory**'. The book '*An Outline of Esoteric Science*' was published in 1910.

Important themes include:

- the human being as body, soul and spirit;
- the path of spiritual development;

- spiritual influences on world-evolution and history; and
- reincarnation and karma.

Steiner emphasized that there is an objective natural & spiritual world that can be known, & that perceptions of the spiritual world & incorporeal beings are, under conditions of training comparable to that required for the natural sciences, including self-discipline, replicable by multiple observers. It is on this basis that spiritual science is possible, with radically different epistemological foundations than those of natural science. He believed that natural science was correct in its methods but one-sided for exclusively focusing on sensory phenomena, while mysticism was vague in its methods, though seeking to explore the inner & spiritual life. Anthroposophy was meant to apply the systematic methods of the former to the content of the latter.

For Steiner, the cosmos is permeated & continually transformed by the creative activity of non-physical processes & spiritual beings. For the human being to become conscious of the objective reality of these processes & beings, it is necessary to creatively enact & reenact, within, their creative activity. So objective spiritual knowledge always entails creative inner activity. Steiner articulated three stages of any creative deed.

- Moral intuition: the ability to discover or, preferably, develop valid ethical principles;

- Moral imagination: the imaginative transformation of such principles into a concrete intention applicable to the particular situation (situational ethics);
- Moral technique: the realization of the intended transformation, depending on a mastery of practical skills.

Steiner termed his work from this period onwards Anthroposophy. He emphasized that the spiritual path he articulated builds upon & supports individual freedom & independent judgment; for the results of spiritual research to be appropriately presented in a modern context they must be in a form accessible to logical understanding, so that those who do not have access to the spiritual experiences underlying anthroposophical research can make independent evaluations of the latter's results. Spiritual training is to support what Steiner considered the overall purpose of human evolution, the development of the mutually interdependent qualities of love & freedom.

In 1899 Steiner experienced what he described as a life-transforming inner encounter with the being of Christ; previously he had little or no relation to Christianity in any form. Steiner was then 38, & the experience of meeting the Christ occurred after a tremendous inner struggle. To use Steiner's own words, **the "experience culminated in my standing in the spiritual presence of the Mystery of Golgotha in a most profound and solemn festival of knowledge."**

Steiner describes Christ as the unique pivot & meaning of earth's evolutionary processes & human history, redeeming the Fall from Paradise. He understood the Christ as a being that unifies & inspires all religions, not belonging to a

particular religious faith. To be "Christian" is, for Steiner, a search for balance between polarizing extremes & the ability to manifest love in freedom.

Central principles of his understanding include:

- The being of Christ is central to all religions, though called by different names by each.
- Every religion is valid and true for the time and cultural context in which it was born.
- Historical forms of Christianity need to be transformed in our times in order to meet the ongoing evolution of humanity.

In Steiner's esoteric cosmology, the spiritual development of humanity is interwoven in & inseparable from the cosmological development of the universe. Continuing the evolution that led to humanity being born out of the natural world, the Christ being brings an impulse enabling human consciousness of the forces that act creatively, but unconsciously, in nature

Steiner also posited two different Jesus children involved in the Incarnation of the Christ: one child descended from Solomon, as described in the Gospel of Matthew; the other child from Nathan, as described in the Gospel of Luke. He references in this regard the fact that the genealogies in these two gospels list twenty-six (Luke) to forty-one (Matthew) completely different ancestors for the generations from David to Jesus.

Steiner's view of the second coming of Christ is also unusual. He suggested that this would not be a physical reappearance, but rather, meant that the Christ being would become manifest in non-physical form, in the "etheric realm" – i.e. visible to spiritual vision and apparent in community life – for increasing numbers of people, beginning around the year 1933. He emphasized that the future would require humanity to recognize this Spirit of Love in all its genuine forms, regardless of how this is named. He also warned that the traditional name, "Christ", might be used, yet the true essence of this Being of Love ignored.

In the 1920s, Steiner was approached by **Friedrich Rittelmeyer**, a Lutheran pastor with a congregation in Berlin, who asked if it was possible to create a more modern form of Christianity. Soon others joined Rittelmeyer – mostly Protestant pastors & theology students, but including several Roman Catholic priests. Steiner offered counsel on renewing the spiritual potency of the sacraments while emphasizing freedom of thought & a personal relationship to religious life. He envisioned a new synthesis of Catholic & Protestant approaches to religious life, terming this "**modern, Johannine Christianity**".

The resulting movement for religious renewal became known as "**The Christian Community**". Its work is based on a free relationship to the Christ, without dogma or policies. Its priesthood, which is open to both men & women, is free to preach out of their own spiritual insights & creativity.

Steiner's work has influenced a broad range of notable personalities. These include philosophers **Albert Schweitzer, Owen Barfield & Richard Tarnas**; writers

Saul Bellow, Andrej Belyj, Michael Ende, Selma Lagerlöf, Edouard Schuré, David Spangler, William Irwin Thompson; child psychiatrist Eva Frommer; economist Leonard Read; artists Josef Beuys, Wassily Kandinsky, Murray Griffin; esotericist & educationalist George Trevelyan; actor & acting teacher Michael Chekhov; cinema director Andrei Tarkovsky; composers Jonathan Harvey & Viktor Ullmann; & conductor Bruno Walter. Albert Schweitzer wrote that he & Steiner had in common that they had "taken on the life mission of working for the emergence of a true culture enlivened by the ideal of humanity & to encourage people to become truly thinking beings".