

*An Outline of Occult Science*

Written during Rudolf Steiner's so-called "mad years," *An Outline of Occult Science* was first published in 1910 as a sequel to 1904's *Theosophy*. Writing with the surety of a "knower," Steiner repeatedly emphasizes the requirement for clairvoyant observation as the only means of verification of his expressions of ultimate reality, and students who go far enough in their pursuit of these highest truths, Steiner asserts, will "arrive at the same, not at different conclusions regarding them."

Steiner's worldview begins with the nature of humankind, whose physical body (first principle) is related to the mineral kingdom but shares with the plant kingdom a vital or etheric body as its second principle. We share with the animals Steiner's third principle of an astral body, but are unique in that mankind alone possesses the fourth principle of I-ness or ego. Steiner's constitution of man includes various perplexing terms that he uses to demonstrate cause, purpose and relationship, equating the astral body to the "soul body" and the soul as it is linked to this astral body as the "sentient soul." An astral body that has undergone transformation by the ego becomes first "spirit self," then "life-spirit" and finally "spirit-man." Beyond the astral body are the "rational/intellectual soul" (which may equate either to lower mind, or to Buddhi) and the "consciousness soul" (which may equate either to higher mind, or to Spirit). These terms appear to indicate components of human nature that are quite similar to those provided in the theosophy of Alice A. Bailey but may not be directly equitable.

Steiner next informs the student about the processes that occur directly after the death of the mineral body, which include the purification and subsequent dissipation of the etheric body, followed by a similar action upon the astral body. Once the decedent exists only in their egoic

body, they are able to incorporate the lessons and experiences of the recent lifetime into the permanent portion of itself. Steiner asserts that in this plane, which roughly equates to the mental plane, thought-forms are seen to be “real entities” who are of a “like nature with his ego.” He identifies three regions in the spiritual worlds, which more or less align with “solid land,” the “sphere of ocean and river,” and a third “atmospheric region.” Interestingly, it is in this last region where colors are observed through their complements; a red stone is observable as green, etc.

Steiner next discusses the long evolution of humankind from eras long before the present world, through the civilizations of Lemuria and Atlantis, and into present day. He asserts, as other theosophists do as well, that “earth has passed through three previous planetary conditions” which he enigmatically identifies as “the saturn, the sun, and the moon evolutions.” These incarnations of the entity known as earth, which do not include the planetary logos, will eventually lead to the Jupiter, Venus, and Vulcan evolutions. While Steiner utilizes different names for these evolutions, they appear to be very similar to the globes, chains, and rounds explained in the theosophy of Alice A. Bailey in great detail. Additionally, although Steiner doesn’t use the precise terms, his view of the “successive periods of human evolution” align more or less with theosophy’s terminology of root-races and subraces. Steiner assigns these periods to the ancient Indian, ancient Persian, the Egypto-Chaldean, and the Greco-Roman periods, while we are today in the fifth period.

To close the book, Steiner introduces the Lords of Form, who lie behind these various evolutionary periods, identifying the Lords of Will, Wisdom, and Motion. These once again, closely resemble the trinity described by other theosophical writers, and defined by Alice A.

Bailey as the three archetypal Rays, which are identical to the three aspects of the Christian trinity. In summary, Steiner asserts that “The secret of all future development is a recognition that everything achieved by man from a right comprehension of evolution is a sowing of seed which must ripen into love.”

1. Steiner, Rudolf. *An Outline of Occult Science*. Anthroposophic Press, 1910.

<https://www.amazon.com/Outline-Occult-Science-Rudolf-Steiner/dp/1790796202>.