



A Life for the Spirit: Rudolf Steiner in the Crosscurrents of Our Time (Vista)

Henry Barnes

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“Whether or not Steiner’s insights are valid is for each of us to determine. His work is not easy, and he challenges our usual thinking every step of the way. The insights are radical, in the original meaning of that word: they go to the roots. We are forced more and more to realize that only through such thinking can actions arise that are truly healing and constructive.”

—Henry Barnes (from the introduction)

Few people today recognize Rudolf Steiner’s name, yet those who are aware of him know that his presence pervades every forward-looking aspect of contemporary life. Nearly all fields of life have been fructified by his insights—not abstractly or theoretically, but in a concrete way that changes lives. No wonder, then, that Steiner has been called “the best kept secret of the twentieth century.”

Born in 1861 in Kraljvec, Austria, Steiner showed evidence early on of the most varied gifts—a precise and probing scientific mind combined with a natural clairvoyant ability to see into the spiritual world, a determined need to think things through for himself, and a profound reverence for the divine.

He first made his mark as a philosopher and the editor of Goethe’s scientific writings. He also recognized the revolutionary spirit in Nietzsche. But Steiner’s destiny led him in a different direction. Profound cognitive experiences determined that his task would lie in service to the spirit. While recognizing the integrity of modern science’s phenomenological empiricism, he also knew that the time had come to extend the field of science to include investigation of the supersensible. Working at first within the Theosophical Society, but always speaking and writing out of his own experience, Steiner developed the foundations for a thoroughly modern spiritual-scientific discipline that would transform spiritual and cultural life.

Until his death in 1925, in countless lectures and books, Steiner created the body of knowledge and practice known as “anthroposophy,” which not only challenged and extended the underlying methods of modern knowledge, but stimulated many practical cultural initiatives such as: Waldorf education, biodynamic agriculture, the art of eurythmy, the movement for a threefold social order, and anthroposophical medicine.

Henry Barnes—the author of *Into the Heart’s Land: A Century of Rudolf Steiner’s Work in North America*—recounts the dynamic life of this remarkable man. He does so by placing Steiner in the crosscurrents of history and showing him not as a spectator or ivory-tower philosopher, but as a leading actor in the drama, one whose entire being was given in service to humanity and to the spirit.

Contents:

- Foreword by Robert McDermott
- Introduction: In Search of a New Thinking
- The Twentieth Century: Battleground for Human Individuality
- Child of Middle Europe: Biographical Foundations
- The Weimar Years: Nietzsche, Steiner, and the Redemption of Thinking
- The Years of Inner Testing : Berlin

- The Work Unfolds
- The Building Rises
- Insight Becomes Life: The Three fold Movement for Social Reform
- The First Waldorf School and the Independence of Education
- The Healing Arts
- Religious Renewal
- Out of Fire
- Renewal from Within: The Christmas Foundation
- Months of Grace
- Afterword: The Battle Continues?What Can I Do?

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