The Method of Spiritual Science: Further Notes

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In an article entitled «The Method of Spiritual Science» in «Elemente der Naturwissenschaft», No. 53, I referred to the present state of development of spiritual science and to the need for a comprehensive review of the situation. As we begin to look towards the dawn of a new millenium, it becomes increasingly important that the nature of spiritual science, in its present form, should be clearly understood, to provide a sound basis for future development. In the present article, I would like to add some further detail and perhaps help towards the processes of review and clarification.

Rudolf Steiner describes how the scientific spirit after being trained in the sphere of natural science can be further developed in a form that transcends the special associations and content of natural science: in this form it can be applied to the aesthetic, moral and other spheres.

In reviewing the history of spiritual science, we can trace the processes by which the scientific spirit has been progressively applied to the study and exploration of many aspects of life and culture.

It is convenient to consider spiritual science as following two main lines of development since 1900, one based on the Anthroposophical Society and the other on spiritual impulses arising in contemporary culture and including everything that is publicly available from the work of *Rudolf Steiner*, to which I gave the name *Holistic Science*. The latter movement, though unorganized, has been growing in importance during the last twenty years, but the two aspects of Steiner's work, which he describes as «private» (including personal and Society matters) and «public» (or universal), have actually been developing throughout the period under consideration, although the distinction between the two is not a clear-cut one.

The features of a) Anthroposophical Spiritual Science and b) Holistic Science, 1900 – 1993, will now be briefly considered.

ANTHROPOSOPHICAL SPIRITUAL SCIENCE

Steiner showed how his comprehensive method of observation and investigation could be applied in many fields including biology, medicine, physics, architecture, sculpture,

painting, poetry and sociology. Since his death, the process of developing the aesthetic, moral and other senses, in a systematic way, has continued. Much work of a theoretical, practical and sociological character has been done, and a great deal of literature and information is available. However, *Steiner* did not have time to give more than brief indications, on many occasions, and the subsequent work of elaborating these has often proved difficult.

There are common threads running through many of today's spiritual impulses and movements, but the essential rigorous element, offering an eventual unification of science, art and ethics, is provided, above all, by the method and world-concept of *Rudolf Steiner*. This element is being applied in, for example, the Anthroposophical approaches to science and philosophy, but it is not always appreciated that this quality applies also to the aesthetic, ethical and social spheres.

Some headings under which the rigorous element in Anthroposophy may be reviewed and examined are indicated below.

Coordination
of the work of different individuals and groups. In view of the very wide field opened up by *Steiner*, and the comprehensive nature of his method, it is not surprising that individual workers have approached the same study in different ways. A point has now been reached where special attention can be directed, with advantage, to the processes of coordination, continuity and cross-referencing.

Assessment and Correction
in each field of study. In the course of these pioneering investigations, there have naturally been problems to resolve and differing approaches to reconcile. This applies to, for example, «The Science of the Etheric Forces» and the nature of formative activity. The publication of these experiences, with details of problems encountered, solutions obtained and outstanding difficulties will be of value to other workers, as well as being of general interest.

Updating
Experimental methods have played an important part in the history of Anthroposophy. Work carried out more than 50 years ago is sometimes quoted in recent literature – for example, *L. Kolisko's* investigation of the relationship between planets and metals. Repetition and presentation of the work to modern standards, with a description of the principles involved, would serve a useful purpose. Capillary dynamolysis is described as having been «widely used for practical purposes» («Rudolf Steiner» by *F. Carlgren*, 1972, p.40). However, some of the early hopes of the method do not yet seem to have been realized. A statement of the present position in regard to the method, and possible further development or improvement, would be helpful.

Perceptual Development
The spiritual perceptions of Anthroposophical investigators – in, for example, the realms of botany, zoology and human physiology – form a vital part of spiritual science. Some