

The Cosmic Background of the French Revolution I
Unrevised Notes of Three Lectures by Willi Sucher
Hawkwood College, England - July 30-31 and August 1, 1954

Lecture I - 30 July 1954

I would like to begin by drawing a picture of the background of our present world situation, which resembles, in a sense, the situation of humanity just before the French Revolution.

About 1772-3, it was similar to this current historical moment. Diderot and his workers had completed the French Encyclopedia, which was intended to reflect the monumental heights to which humanity had climbed in knowledge. (It was, in a way, an illusion, for humanity has progressed far since this milestone. Yet, all that great knowledge was unable to create healthy social conditions. The French Revolution was the answer to this fact, i.e., that materialistic knowledge could not save France from eventual catastrophe. It was a one-sided knowledge that was then supreme, but it did not furnish a satisfying life for the French people.

Our present world is different; it is comparatively larger through new communications, which has created a family rather than separate nations, as was the circumstances then. But it also means that tensions, as well, are now worldwide. We have gained even greater knowledge, especially in science, and with still more to come. This is the opening up of a new age, both an atomic and a cosmic age. Atomic fission, in all its aspects, is the handling of cosmic forces, for good or evil. Knowledge ever extends and expands into the cosmos; yet, so far we have only been able to use it mainly for destruction.

A new page of history is turned. In the 18th century humanity had knowledge, yet was incapable of applying it to social affairs. Now, but on a cosmic scale, we see the latest stupendous discoveries. Still, once again we see that humanity is failing abysmally to create healthy social conditions out of them. It is only nine years since the first atom bombs were exploded in the East, and we know their disastrous havoc. The answer is prompt: As a consequence humanity cannot control the eastern situation any longer. All our scientific achievements have only made us less capable of coping with humanity's demands. But even so, this need not be a curse.

Looking back toward the French Revolution, we see that, in spite of the tension between head and limbs in humanity, so to speak, it is still possible to create a healthy social life. The later years of the 18th century could have swung the pendulum, if only humanity had accepted the three great Ideals that became the "slogans" which ruled the Revolution.

It is possible even now. With an extremely developed cosmic knowledge, we must strive once more to find ideas and develop thoughts that can establish a healthy balance between the cosmic forces and the social needs of humanity. The aim of this conference is to find this healthy balance. Though very few, we can work together; for ultimately, only a few scientists develop and let loose these great forces, while only a few can be the spearheads of humanity in the social field. With dictatorial powers, they expand the deeper will of humanity, but with complete misunderstanding. The deeper humanity goes, the more we are called upon to concentrate our capacities and hold the balance to prevent society from going down altogether. And I believe this is not a matter of numbers, but of inner energy and inner power.

We are really very fortunate to have this opportunity to gather together, and it also lays upon us a deep obligation. We must try to come to grips with a real understanding of these cosmic forces, but not as modern science does. Rudolf Steiner has indicated this, as well as the true approach to the problem. The more one reads him, the more one realizes that one has not read him! For we know so much, recall it and pass it on; but we do so little with it.

We can handle cosmic forces and make them healing, for in their essence they are healing. It is only their caricatures that are destructive.

In this conference, color will be spoken of. What is color? It is, again, an aspect of the cosmos. The rainbow has come from the cosmic world, and the human being can use it for healing purposes. It is the same with eurythmy, where the cosmos comes so close to us that we can enact it with gestures. Thus we will not only talk

of the starry world and the cosmos, we will live them. Also, we will study the real history, which is history's spiritual background, wherein cosmic events work into the human world. For historic development is also the creator of the cosmos on Earth. We must cultivate these cosmic forces for creative and positive ends.

In science, we speak much of atoms, electrons, neutrons, protons, and even anti-protons, but no one has ever seen these things. In fact, at this time, no more than their activity on photographic plates is available. That is science, wherein we do not really know the source of what it is that we are handling; meaning, that we have reached a danger point. For this unknown quantity can do anything at any time, and therefore get out of control. Thus, the first demand of this conference is to discover what we are handling.

Rudolf Steiner has given some wonderful indications, of which we have not yet grasped even a fraction. He has revealed, above all, the divine to us, hierarchical Beings who rule this cosmos, and I will give you a recapitulation of their activities as a guiding line for our future talks and discussions.

I will begin with Saturn, the outermost planet in the depths of space, and at the boundary of our solar system, the periphery of our solar universe. Three new planets have been discovered in comparatively recent times, beyond Saturn, but I do not intend to deal with them today. These three later planets: Pluto, Neptune, and Uranus, can only be seen through telescopes and are beyond our normal vision from Earth. Because mechanical means intervene between them and our naked eye is one, though only one, reason why I will not include them in our solar universe as it has been known since pagan times. I will show it as follows:

Saturn...	Will	Thrones...	The foundation of existence
Jupiter...	Wisdom	Kyriotetes...	Life
Mars...	Motion	Dynamis...	Soul
Sun...	Form	Exusiai...	Individualization
Mercury...	Ages, Archetypal Beings	Archai...	Spiritual life
Venus...	Folk Spirit	Archangels...	Relationship
Moon...	Guardian Angel	Angels...	Existence of single being
Earth...	Humanity (related closely to Moon)		

These planets are known to science as solid bodies, moving in separate rhythms, mass, weight, etc. But what can we do with this uncreative, empty knowledge? It leads eventually to destruction, calling up unconscious resentment in a humanity wanting to have its house set in order.

Or, we can think of them as expressions of a Divine world. These planets revolve around the Sun, so say the textbooks. However, if we relate them to the Earth, which is permissible, we find that they move around the Earth, in a certain sense. They are like veils around the Earth. Their seven veils are the vestments of seven hierarchical Beings. I wish to show you these Divine Beings at work in our earthly realm.

Saturn: The Spirits of Will, known through tradition as the Thrones. These Beings bring into existence everything that is in the solar world and on our Earth, for their Will is the foundation of all physical existence. Science has discovered in atomic explosions the expression of this Will, which was established primarily in physical matter. Our ignorant handling of it can only result in destruction, however, not creation.

Jupiter: The Spirits of Wisdom are also known as the Kyriotetes. This vestment of Divine Wisdom has a special capacity, which is not knowledge as we know it, but is so creative that in the course of time, when lifeless existence had developed to a point, these spiritual Beings permeated this existence with life. Divine Wisdom is life.

Mars: The Spirits of Motion, also known as Dynamis, created the soul life in human beings and animals. So far we have seen cosmic forces expressed through these planets as an undifferentiated force.

Sun: Spirits of Form, also known as Exusiai or Elohim. Now there enters that cosmic sphere where Divinities establish individualization in creation. We can speak of individual Beings, not as "life", but a "life"—those who can say, "I Am".

With the three last planets to come, we enter a realm where individualization proceeds apace. This is most apparent in the human realm, though the Sun also works in the realm of nature. You can take, for instance, a crystal as a single entity, and this is due to the working of the Sun, but the purest aspect of individualization is apparent in human beings.

Mercury: Spirits of the Ages, also known as Archai. These Divinities inspire the cultural impulses in human epochs. Even the impulse to take up modern science is the inspiration of a celestial Being working through

Mercury. This scientific task is right for modern humanity. We cannot rely on past intuitive knowledge any longer, but must establish it as scientific fact. Science only becomes wrong when it theorizes—about atoms for instance. Such theories are inspired from the destructive quarter. These spiritual Beings of Mercury inspire our spiritual life, as distinct from the merely intellectual and its mental aberrations.

Venus: The Folk Spirits, known as Archangels, work through the nations from the Venus sphere and through all human communities. Their divine task is to create harmonious relationships. Through love toward all and every being, whether human or in nature, these Beings always work in that which weaves between human beings. The highest expression lies in genuine human love.

Moon: The sphere of the Angels. These are closely connected with the single human being, and the Guardian Angel is a reality—a Divine Being who guides us into Earthly life, who guards us, and leads us out into the spiritual worlds again. But we have lost our old awareness of this mighty Being, and this is the source of much unhappiness. A healthy human life is based on this connection. It also concerns material existence. When we enter the world through embryonic development, these forces have their origin in the sphere of the Moon, while all of Earth's matter is derived and reproduced by Moon Beings.

This is a very brief and general sketch of the true cosmic forces, which warn us of what we are doing when we force their threshold into the spiritual world. It is a realm into which we can make a healthy entry, but should not make a destructive one.

Studying in this way, we will cease to discuss “destiny” as though it also is atomic and “blind”. We will cease to speak of “chance” and “providence” as empty phrases. Dr. Steiner can help us to attain a true knowledge of the working of destiny in humanity and in the single human being, rendering destiny transparent to the hierarchical activities that work behind the veil. Thus destiny no longer hangs like a Damocles Sword above our heads; rather it becomes a window into the future, into the cosmos, and into our true, past history, as we pass through the portal of knowledge of both Earthly and cosmic facts.