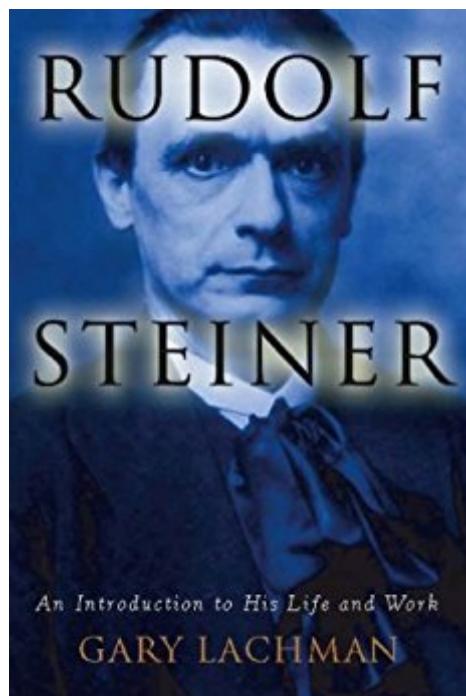


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# Rudolf Steiner: An Introduction To His Life And Work



## Synopsis

The first truly popular biography of the influential twentieth-century mystic and educator who-while widely known for founding the Waldorf schools and other educational and humanitarian movements-remains a mystery to many who benefit from his ideas. People everywhere have heard of Waldorf schools, Biodynamic farming, Camphill Villages, and other innovations of the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). Indeed, Steiner-as an architect, artist, teacher, and agriculturalist-ranks among the most creative and prolific figures of the early twentieth century, pioneering work in alternative education, holistic health, and environmental research. While his accomplishments are felt all over the world, few people understand this unusual figure. Steiner's own writings and lectures fill several bookcases, intimidating those who would like to know more. Works on Steiner are often dense and "insider" in tone, further deterring the curious. No popular biography, written by a sympathetic but critical outsider, has been available. Gary Lachman's *Rudolf Steiner* provides this missing introduction. Along with telling Steiner's story and placing Steiner in his historical context, Lachman's book presents Steiner's key ideas in a readable, accessible manner. In particular, Lachman considers the spread of Steiner's most popular projects, which include Waldorf schools-one of the leading forms of alternative education-and Biodynamic farming-a popular precursor to organic farming. He also traces Steiner's beginnings as a young intellectual in the ferment of fin de siècle culture, to his rise as a thought leader within the influential occult movement of Theosophy, to the founding of his own metaphysical teaching called Anthroposophy. Finally, the book illustrates how Steiner's methods are put into practice today, and relates Steiner's insights into cosmology to the work of current thinkers. Rudolf Steiner is a full-bodied portrait of one of the most original philosophical and spiritual luminaries of the last two centuries, and gives those interested in the history of ideas the opportunity to discover one of the most underappreciated figures of the twentieth century.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book will become the definitive book to introduce Rudolf Steiner's life and ideas to people, especially as another reviewer noted for English speakers. Uniquely balanced, insightful and comprehensive to the spiritual & philosophical antecedents that contributed to Steiner's thought and development of Anthroposophy. Validating my thoughts to the German idealist underpinnings of Anthroposophy, this work will also encourage English readers to reexamine both the cultural/scientific contributions of Goethe as well as seriously consider an indepth study of Steiner's "Philosophy of Freedom" as a long neglected major work of 20th century philosophy. Lachman still continues to amaze and delight me, as both the best writer on esotericism today with a writing style that is fresh, insightful and approachable yet scholarly. There is no work by Gary Lachman I do not have and I will certainly seek out any future works by him as well. This book may cause some consternation among "true believers", but even long time students of Steiner & Anthroposophy will find new insights to his life and work. As much as I admire Steiner and his work, Lachman addresses one such wrinkle I have dealt with, the slight embarrassment brought on by the aesthetics of anthroposophical inspired art, speech formation, drama and painting. To the contemporary these expressions seem ponderous, naive and simply outdated. Lachman is gracious in describing Steiner's mystery dramas as "an acquired taste", I personally find them unreadable, verbose and probably unwatchable as well. Yet Steiner stated the essense of his philosophy is contained within these works. Regarding Steiner's seminal Christology, described by Steiner as the "Mystery of Golgotha" is a major challenge to the casual reader.

Though I've been studying Rudolf Steiner's work for almost 20 years, I've not been particularly interested in his life from a biographer's perspective. Believing that a tree is indeed known by its

fruit, I've been concerned to know whether or not Steiner was secretly torturing animals or humans as part of his "spiritual science," but the lack of any such stories, and the love and wisdom evident in his work itself, has satisfied any curiosity I have had regarding his character. Recently, though, I've taken to learning more about the context of Steiner's work, especially the more esoteric practices. Learning about the history of the Theosophical Society, occult or mystery schools through the ages, and current spiritual practices - these have been more and more of interest. Gary Lachman's "Rudolf Steiner: An Introduction to His Life And Work" has satisfied my need to establish such a wider context for my study of spiritual science. His style is readable, his research credible. His background on the Theosophical Society, descriptions of Steiner's phases of life and work, and discussions of relevant, contemporary philosophical trends, all contribute a needed depth and breadth to Steiner's work. Most importantly for me, his sympathies are with what I take to be the main thrust of Steiner's work: the practice of spiritual science. Two things in particular stood out to me in Lachman's book: First, Lachman identifies the primary character of Steiner's philosophy as phenomenology. I've always thought this, and I think it's an especially fruitful path to explore for the continued influence and practice of spiritual science.

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