

## BOOK REVIEW

by Daniel Mackenzie for [BEING HUMAN](#) magazine, 2018

*Living Inner Development : The Necessity of True Inner Development in the Light of Anthroposophy* is Lisa Romero's third book on spiritual self-transformation. It presupposes, but does not pre-require, familiarity with her previous works and will be more comprehensible to readers who have some background in Anthroposophy. As Romero stipulates in the foreword, however, "it is accessible to those who can utilize it."

Anyone who has studied Rudolf Steiner's works on spiritual development knows how overwhelming it can be to attempt to devise a systematic approach to working with the content, so multifarious are his offerings. One feels blessed and awed by the curriculum the founding Anthroposophist bequeathed upon humanity, yet bereft of an organized, clear method of taking up the actual work.

The daunting mountain of Anthroposophical self-development towers like Everest among the foothills of many less rigorous contemporary paradigms that dominate the contemporary dialogue of spiritual growth. Enter Lisa Romero, who, having herself ascended the higher realms through decades of inner work within the Michael School - also referred to here as *The Path of Love* - offers her services as a uniquely qualified guide. A teacher of Anthroposophical meditation, Romero acts as Sherpa to those intrepid souls who would also attempt to take on the life challenge of spiritual self-development in service of humanity. Though her approach may be characterized as strictly "Steinerian", Romero peppers her writing with quotes from the likes of Goethe, Aquinas, Rumi and Hafiz.

The book is succinctly organized into four chapters preceded by an introduction in which Romero makes a simple case for the importance of spiritual self-development. She identifies the innate, universal human sense that life is ultimately about growth and development, asserting that the most effective way we can meaningfully contribute to human evolution is to attend to our own personal evolution. "Self-development" is, anthroposophically understood, not about the *self* per se, but about the individual's contribution to the community

*through* the development of the self. Romero goes on to describe the threshold that exists between physical reality and spiritual reality, noting that, besides death, it can only be crossed in three ways.

She states that humanity has collectively begun to approach this threshold unconsciously, and that if we wish to facilitate our own conscious crossing, we must undertake healthy spiritual development. The only other way across, the author admonishes, is through unhealthy intervention upon the bodily sheaths through psychotropic drug-induced toxicity or trauma. We can always wait to be carried across by the tide of evolution, but if we rise to the task of our age and actively take up the inner work, Romero assures us, we may productively aid in the healthy evolution of humanity.

In chapter one, *Inner Development for the Physical World*, we are first reminded that Anthroposophy does not exhort us to *believe* any particular concepts, rather it gives

us a means of gaining *understanding* through our own inner activity. Potentially dangerous misconceptions arrived at through dogmatic belief or limited intellectual thinking may be corrected through true spiritual insight born from a higher form of cognitive thinking. This *living thinking*, as the author terms it, is arrived at through the practice of time-tested, specific meditative exercises and verses, which safeguard the healthy development of our inner capacities. Our incarnate experience in the physical body gives us the opportunity to experience our basic three human faculties of *thinking, feeling* and *willing* through the *sentient soul*, the *intellectual soul* and the *consciousness soul*.

Romero points out that in the present “Consciousness Soul” age, we are called upon to ascend to a higher level of freedom by transforming and balancing our faculties in such a way that we become less beholden to the impulses of the sentient soul and the dry logic of the intellectual soul, drawing instead upon the knowing spiritual wisdom of the consciousness soul. She introduces “*more radiant than the sun*”, a verse of seven lines that becomes the meditative focus of the book, describing not only how to work with it, but why it is constructed in its particular manner and what results we may expect from working with it.

In Chapter Two, *Inner Development for the Elemental World*, Romero distinguishes the three modes of initiatory experience: *seeing*, *sensing* and *enduring*. Her ensuing description of the *elemental* world draws our attention to the fact that there are various distinct non-physical realms, which the human consciousness will experience in different ways. This realm, home to “elemental beings and the collective consciousness of the animal kingdom,” is characterized as closest to the physical realm in which we normally find ourselves. Nevertheless, we must learn how to navigate its unfamiliar territory of image-experiences, where we encounter aspects of our own being and feeling life that are *reversed* or mirrored in that they stream back towards us as if coming from outside ourselves. Here we must also grapple with the dark, looming thought-beings of *doubt*, *fear* and *loathing*. These arise directly from those aspects within us that have yet to be transformed if we are ever to approach and cross the threshold into the actual spiritual worlds.

We must develop inner fortitude to bear the discomfort, even horror of what we might see of ourselves in this realm. The crossing of that threshold, past which we may not carry our earthly ego, necessitates a real purification of the soul. Romero elaborates on the inherent challenges of this realm, and the forces of *hope*, *faith* and *enthusiasm* we must cultivate to surmount them. She describes how we may encounter the etheric remnant of a spirit who has moved on to higher realms, a “shell” that still transmits information about that individual’s concluded incarnation. And since this is the realm of animal spirits, we may experience it differently depending on whether or not we have intermingled with animal consciousness by consuming a meat-heavy diet. Inner exercises that require us to work with powerful symbols such as the *caduceus*, the *rose cross* and the *pentagram* will help prepare us for the meeting with our double, which is unavoidable if we aspire to cross the threshold.

Chapter 3, *Inner Development of the Spiritual World*, finally escorts us across the threshold into the lower spiritual realm, where the soul mirroring of the elemental realm has been replaced with *pure soul activity*. The ego has been left behind, as only the higher “I” may enter into this realm. Romero explores what exactly it means to achieve this level of development, deferring a few times to quotations from Rudolf Steiner and from another of her preferred sources - Mabel Collins’s

*Light On The Path*. She then describes in detail the seven different portals through which we may begin to learn the language of the lower spiritual realm: *color, measure, number, sound, direction, movement and form*.

The final chapter, *Preparing for the Higher Spiritual World*, delves into the more extreme challenges facing the aspirant at this advanced level, where our emerging inner light casts a correspondingly dark shadow - our dreadful egotism has been revealed to us by the humbling encounter with the Guardian. Whereas the lower spiritual world is the realm of the Hierarchies, there is nothing in the higher spiritual world but the peaceful experience of the "true I". As we enter here, we must even leave behind *the experiencing soul*; our only I-experience here is pure consciousness. We perceive the workings of the Hierarchies from a cosmic point of view and gain a profound understanding of the laws of karma.

Romero warns us of other spiritual paths that involve taking psychoactive drugs to facilitate altered states of consciousness. Such interference upon the physical body may indeed give us temporary access to the *astral* realm, but it constitutes a kind of "gate-crashing" the threshold to the true spiritual word. In doing so we risk sustaining imbalances in our physical, etheric and astral bodies, and - worse yet - we may be barred by the Hierarchies from access to the higher spiritual realms.

By guiding us step by step first through each of these levels, the Path Of Love strengthens our thinking so we can perceive and integrate thought-pictures engraved upon the elemental substance by the beings of the lower spiritual realm. Thus, when we rise to the higher realms, we may merge with cosmic thoughts of human evolution. Inspired by these cosmic thoughts to selfless deeds, the Michaelic initiate invariably turns down Lucifer's offer of freedom from karma and incarnation, returning instead to work among fellow humans in the collaborative effort of evolution. This paramount devotion to others is what earns the Michael School its alternate name *The Path of Love*.

With *Living Inner Development*, Lisa Romero has contributed another challenging, esoteric workbook for spiritual self-transformation through Anthroposophy. This book is recommended to anyone who would intentionally endeavor to become a more conscious, loving and responsible human being.