

One-Sided Political Intentions of the English-Speaking World and the Search for what is Universally Human (Towards a Deeper Understanding of 9/11)

by *Richard Ramsbotham*

Whatever our thoughts about them, we are almost all familiar with comments and claims about public and political life being steered in certain directions, or even being controlled altogether, by various ‘elites’. These claims may often even refer to ‘occult groups’ or ‘secret societies’ or ‘secret brotherhoods’, able to wield enormous influence ‘in high places’ of political power. Such claims are often so wildly speculative and so far-fetched, often involving many further bizarre claims, that the opposite attitude is often firmly adhered to by people – namely, denying all validity to any such claims.

Neither approach is satisfactory, though, and we must simply ask: what, if any, is the *truth* about these claims?

If we are willing to ask this question, however, and without prejudice, to hold an open mind for a moment as to whether there *is* or *isn't* any truth behind such claims, where can we look for any help in relation to this? The wildly speculative claims all too often offer no help in this regard, as they almost always fail to present what they say in such a way that we can test it with our own thinking or weigh it up against all the phenomena we perceive around us. And it should certainly never be a question of simply *believing* what someone might say. Where else, though, can we look?

For a number of reasons, the statements made by Rudolf Steiner on the subject of the influence of ‘secret societies’ on public and political life can, I think, prove extremely helpful. Firstly, they are in no sense speculative. He describes them as the results of his own “spiritual-scientific” research – and, whether or not we become able to substantiate them for ourselves, they are calmly and thoroughly expressed and in considerable detail. Steiner also makes transparently clear the method by which he has been able to carry out such research. Secondly, even if we – or most of us – are not yet able to *carry out* such research for ourselves involving direct spiritual experience, for example, of the hidden workings of such groups, we can nevertheless fully think it through and *understand* it. As Steiner consistently points out, the results of such research, even if we cannot *arrive at* them ourselves, may nevertheless be fully tested by our own healthy powers of thinking. There is no question of our being asked to believe in someone else’s far-fetched assumptions. If we do not find ourselves able to think these statements through, and understand them, there is no reason whatsoever that we should believe them. Thirdly, Steiner’s research is not offered as something purely meta-physical – as something, in other words, whose truth we might understand, but which bears no relation to what we perceive in the world around us. Steiner very much asks us to test his research against all the phenomena in the world we may encounter.

This holds true in a very particular way with Steiner’s statements about the influence of hidden groups on public and political life. For unless we are able to observe the *effects* of such influence on historical or contemporary politics, any statements about this will remain speculative. Steiner is specific on this point:

“So long as I assert that this has been stated in secret societies, it may be doubted. But, if it is pointed out that the whole direction of politics is such that this principle evidently underlies it, people are then within reality with their ordinary sound common sense.”¹

What, then, does Steiner have to say about such hidden groups?

I have no wish to attempt to be exhaustive about this. (Interested readers may easily follow this up for themselves.) I would like, though, to offer three extensive quotations by Rudolf Steiner regarding one particular aspect of this: *the relationship of such groups to the political powers of the*

Western or Anglo-American world. Is there a particular connection between such groups and Anglo-American political intentions in/for the world - and if so, how are we to understand this?

THREE QUOTATIONS

Each of the three quotations are from the long cycle of lectures Steiner gave in December 1916 and January 1917, in the midst of the First World War, which are published in English under the title: *The Karma of Untruthfulness*. (Two volumes.) Each of the quotations will repay careful reading – as they contain many specific details which expand upon the main theme.

In the first quotation Steiner speaks about the significant and valid contribution the West – in this case Britain – has made to world political life. After referring to “the spiritual and cultural life of the British people” Steiner continues:

“I mean the kind of cultural life as it appears before the world in British institutions and the life of the British people. This element is, above all, extremely political in character; its tendency is supremely political. One consequence emerging from it is the political thinking that is so much admired by the rest of the world; in a certain way the most advanced and free kind of political thinking. Wherever in the world efforts have been made to set up political institutions in which freedom can live – freedom in the sense we have come to understand it since the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century – there, ideas have been borrowed from British thinking. The French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century was more a matter of feeling, of passionate impulsiveness, but the thoughts it contained had been brought over from British thinking. The manner in which political concepts are formed, the manner in which political bodies are structured, the manner in which the will of the people is led within political organizations that are as free as possible so that it can work from all sides – all this is expressed in British political thinking in accordance with its original tendencies. That is why so many new states in the nineteenth century imitated British institutions. In many places efforts were made to take over the British way of parliamentary life and parliamentary institutions, for in this connection British thinking is the teacher of modern times.

In England during the nineteenth century, let us say up to its final decades, this political thinking came to expression in some very important politicians who modelled their thoughts in particular on this political thinking. One thing especially became obvious: the wellbeing (das Heil) of the world could be brought about by this thinking if only people would devote themselves entirely to it and allow nothing else to take effect in the arrangements of the various institutions. Therefore, politicians who may seem one-sided to some extent but who model their thoughts entirely on this political thinking and endeavour to work in accordance with it, appear as outstanding and entirely moral. Think of Cobden², Bright³ and others, not to speak of greater men who are always being mentioned; for in this field it is very possible to go astray as soon as a really prominent position is reached. That is why I mention those who have not gone astray in any direction but who are genuinely important in the sense I now mean. I could name many others. (...) This way of forming thoughts of a political orientation belongs in its character very much to the fifth post-Atlantean period. That is where it belongs and where it has to be developed.”

After referring in this way, though, to what is valid and beneficial in English political life, Steiner immediately adds:

“In those western brotherhoods I told you about there lived an exact knowledge of these things(...) And in some individuals there was the will (...) to make use of the forces concerned. (...) If someone wants to use these things, he can.”⁴

In the second quotation – from the lecture given two days later – Steiner elaborates on this danger. A few preparatory remarks are perhaps necessary to provide some background to what Steiner is saying.

Our current civilization, since the Renaissance, is clearly quite different from earlier civilizations or cultures, such as those of Ancient Greece or Rome. Similarly, these cultures or civilizations were

radically different from those preceding them, such as those of ancient Egypt, Assyria or Babylon. Journeying through time, human faculties can certainly appear to fade, that were possessed by people in older cultures, but *new* human faculties are also developed. Thus in Ancient Greece, as an older mythological or clairvoyant consciousness slowly waned, so new capacities of reasoning and philosophical thinking arose and were developed.

With the Renaissance, as humanity emerged from the Middle Ages, we started to face new tasks and challenges – such as those brought in by the widespread development of modern science. We have arrived, without, it seems, too much effort on our parts, at a far more wakeful kind of consciousness, even if we only compare ourselves to the time of the Middle Ages. Yet it is clearly also necessary that we steadily transform and evolve our present level of scientific consciousness if we are to overcome many of the escalating problems and dangers caused by our own and by our civilization’s limited perspectives – for example by its dependence, all too often, in its search for answers, on a very materialistic science and technology.

Steiner names this new era of consciousness we have been living in since the beginning of the Renaissance as the era of the “*consciousness soul*” - (thus distinguishing it from people’s customary soul-experience in previous eras). He also refers to this era as the “fifth post-Atlantean epoch”, (thus distinguishing it from the previous epoch, for example, which included the cultures of Ancient Greece and Rome, which he refers to as the “fourth post-Atlantean epoch”).

The names themselves are of course not what is important here. What *is* important, though, is that *however* we choose to refer to the current era we live in, or to humanity’s customary state of consciousness today, these are *universal* concerns. Humanity’s evolution *towards* our present state of consciousness, our present state of consciousness itself, and all further possible evolution beyond it, relates to everyone, and can therefore be said to have a significance which is *universally human*. We might even say that *unless* humanity’s further development is in accordance with what is universal in us, it will remain limited and one-sided, and will sooner or later encounter great or even insurmountable obstacles on its path into the future.

The strongest ‘occult groups’ or ‘secret societies’ of the West (which are not to be seen as identical with such groups as the Freemasons, but rather as being ‘behind’ these, and therefore able to exert a powerful influence on them and on their members⁵) wish precisely, however, to put a *one-sided* picture of evolution into the world – where civilization from now onwards is to be given a solely *Anglo-Saxon* or *Anglo-American* stamp.

Such groups are very well aware, says Steiner, of the spiritual and cultural realities we have been referring to – whereby humanity as a whole evolves through different periods of civilization. They are also aware that the Anglo-Saxon world does have a particular contribution to make to our present “fifth epoch”, as Steiner spoke of in relation to Cobden and Bright. But instead of describing all this in such a way as to help humanity evolve in accordance with that which is universally human, these groups deliberately spread the one-sided teaching that *only* what is Anglo-Saxon (or Anglo-American)⁶ is valid.

In the second long quotation from the *Karma of Untruthfulness* Steiner begins by describing how these one-sided intentions even undermine or negate the genuine contribution that could be made by English political life. Steiner concludes by describing how the attempt to force such one-sided intentions on the rest of the world must inevitably lead to conflict, unless everyone else should simply agree to meekly submit to such dominance. This, as Steiner points out, is highly unlikely.

“It really is so that, on the one hand, there exists the task which the English people are called upon to perform during the fifth post-Atlantean period, and yet this purpose is constantly being thwarted from quite another direction. And though there are indeed beautiful voices in the orchestra, as I described the day before yesterday, there are also a good many others to be heard as well. Let me draw your attention to some remarks made by Lord Rosebery⁷ in 1893, not because they are particularly important but because they are a symptomatic expression of something that does actually exist. Lord Rosebery said:

‘It is said that our Empire is large enough and that we possess sufficient territories ... We must, however, examine not only what we need today but also what we shall need in the future ... We must not forget that it is a part of our duty and our heritage to ensure that the world bears the stamp of our people and not that of any other ...’

It is important to know that such voices, too, join in the orchestra of the world. Lord Rosebery himself was not particularly important in this direction, but the way he spoke in this tone was a good example of what I wanted to point out. It is important that a pretension of this kind should ring forth, not from a people but from an individual who is backed by various concealed groups, a pretension that the whole world must be stamped with the mark of the English spirit. It is nothing other than an echo of what had always been taught in some secret brotherhoods in words such as the following: (...) The fifth post-Atlantean period belongs to the English-speaking peoples alone; it is for them to make the world into something which stems from them.

The firm doctrine which had come into being in the secret brotherhoods must be heard resounding in the words of Lord Rosebery; for we must learn to look in the right places. What happens outwardly might be quite a comedy. But we have to see through the comedy and not regard it as something that can bring blessing to the world.

If somebody defends the standpoint of Lord Rosebery, there is no need to enter into any discussion with him, for discussion is quite unnecessary in such matters. Neither is it possible to say that no one has the right to such a standpoint. Everyone has the right to take up Lord Rosebery’s standpoint. But he ought then to say: My aim is to make the world English; and not: I am fighting for the freedom and rights of the small nations. This is what matters. It is not difficult to understand Lord Rosebery from his own standpoint. But someone who does not share this standpoint must, instead, take up another. In consequence, there is no agreement between these two standpoints, and the matter has to be balanced out by the means the world has at its disposal for such matters. Under certain circumstances such standpoints of necessity even lead to the outbreak of war. This is perfectly obvious, since it would otherwise be possible to demand that the opposition subject itself voluntarily to one’s own standpoint. But if their standpoint prevents them from doing this, conflicts arise. I am only describing standpoints, for it is not a matter of dealing with objective judgements here, but simply of the choice between two possibilities.”⁸

When we think about this, it can present us with a very great riddle: *How is it possible* that English political life, which potentially has something of world-wide importance to offer, should instead become the tool of the exact opposite – of the attempt to inflict on the world the goals of a purely one-sided Anglo-centric agenda?

The third long quotation offers us essential help with answering this question. Before addressing it, Steiner speaks in an urgent and telling way of all this asks of us, and of how it connects with the challenges of true freedom:

“It is easy to ask the question: What can I myself do in these painful times? The first thing one can do is to endeavour to understand things, to really see through things. This brings up thoughts which are real forces and these will have an effect. What about the question: Have the good forces no power against the evil forces we see all around us? To answer this we have to remember how difficult human freedom makes it for the spiritual world to assert itself amid the surging waves of materialistic life. This is what it is all about. Is it to be made so very easy for human beings to enter fully into the life of the spirit?

Future ages will look back to today and say: How careless these people were with regard to adopting the life of spirit! The spiritual world is sending it down to us, but human beings resist it with all their might. Apart from all the sadness and suffering holding sway at present, the very fact that all this does hold sway is in itself a destiny signifying a trial. Above all it should be accepted and recognized as a trial. Later it will become apparent to what extent it is necessary for those who — so it is said — are guilty, to suffer together with those who are blameless. For after all, during the course of karma all these things are balanced out. You cannot say: Are not the good spirits

going to intervene? They do intervene to the extent that we open ourselves to them, if we have the courage to do so. But first of all we must be serious about understanding things; we must be deeply serious about trying to understand.

As a contribution to this understanding it is necessary that a number of people muster the strength to oppose the surging waves of materialism with their deepest personal being.(...) Every human being is capable of doing this. And the fruits of such efforts will be sure to follow. (...)

You can summarize in two sentences what is needed to work against materialism — which, after all, has some justification. In the fifth post-Atlantean period the world will become even more pervaded by the industrial and commercial element; but the opposite pole must also exist: There must be people who work on the opposite side because of their understanding of the situation. For what is the aim of these secret brotherhoods? They do not work out of any particular British patriotism, but out of the desire to bring the whole world under the yoke of pure materialism. And because, in accordance with the laws of the fifth post-Atlantean period, certain elements of the British people as the bearer of the consciousness soul are most suitable for this, they want, by means of grey magic, to use these elements as promoters of this materialism.

This is the important point. Those who know what impulses are at work in world events can also steer them. No other national element, no other people, has ever before been so usable as material for transforming the whole world into a materialistic realm. Therefore, those who know want to set their foot on the neck of this national element and strip it of all spiritual endeavour — which, of course, lives equally in all human beings. Just because karma has ordained that the consciousness soul should work here particularly strongly, the secret brotherhoods have sought out elements in the British national character. Their aim is to send a wave of materialism over the earth and make the physical plane the only valid one. A spiritual world is only to be recognized in terms of what the physical plane has to offer.”⁹

Steiner answers the riddle mentioned above. Such ‘secret societies’ have, in fact, no interest whatsoever in the true culture and true gifts of the English-speaking world, but desire solely to *use* the external appearances (or garments) of this culture to further their own utterly materialistic ends.¹⁰

We saw a very clear example of this in the opening and closing ceremonies of the London Olympic Games this Summer, where many of the greatest treasures of British culture were *misrepresented* in order to express something completely different from what they actually contain. (I addressed this in an article in the last issue of *New View*.)

We are therefore faced with the possibility that what *looks like* an expression of English-speaking culture may in fact be merely the vehicle of a force of out-and-out materialism, which deliberately disguises itself in the forms and appearances of the English-speaking world.¹¹

Steiner turns now to what is necessary in order to counter this:

“This must be opposed by the endeavours of those who understand the necessity of a spiritual life on earth. Looked at from this point of view, you can express this counter-force in two sentences. One of these is well-known to you, but it does not yet come fully out of the hearts and souls of human beings: ‘My kingdom is not of this world.’ The sentence ‘My kingdom is not of this world’ must sound forth against that kingdom which is to be spread over the physical plane, that kingdom which is only of this world, that kingdom of commercial and industrial materialism.”

Steiner relates the phrase: ‘My kingdom is not of this world’ to that in the human being which is universal, rather than anything stemming from the one-sided aims, for example, of a particular national group.

He then, surprisingly perhaps, draws a comparison between this universally human element and the fourth or lowest caste in ancient India (excluding the ‘untouchables’) – the caste of the peasants (farmers) or servants. In earlier periods of evolution humanity might be said to have been successively guided and ruled over by representatives of the first three castes. In the ancient Egyptian era, therefore, society was ruled over in a strictly hierarchical manner by the *priestly* caste

– by priest-kings or Pharaohs. Echoes today of such hierarchical, theocratic leadership (for example in the idea of *papal* rulership from Rome) harken back to this earlier period of our evolution. A strong echo of the manner of rulership by the second caste – *the princes or kings* - has frequently lived on, says Steiner, in French political life. English political life provides the example, all too frequently, of rulership by the third caste – that of the *industrialists* or *merchants*. (We see the hazardous consequences of this whenever education, the arts and therapeutic and caring professions, to name but some examples, are increasingly treated and run as if they were businesses.) The present epoch demands, though, that we each develop individually, as free human beings, no longer governed by castes of rulers or leaders, and that we develop a society which is in accordance with this:

“The words ‘My kingdom is not of this world’ link up with the cultivation of what belongs to mankind as a whole. (...) In ancient India there were four castes, in ancient Greece four estates. They came into being one after the other(...) In the fifth post-Atlantean period the fourth estate, social life, that which belongs to mankind as a whole, must come into being.”

Regarding the rulership of the “industrial” caste in Britain, Steiner states, speaking in 1916:

“The third estate, as we know, is the industrial element, what was commerce in ancient Egypt and Greece. This is striving to come to the fore again in the British Empire and for the moment must still be dominant over the fourth element, which will eventually be the general, human element. (...)

In this element there can be no question of dominance, for there is nothing below it over which dominance might be exercised; it is solely a matter of laying the foundation for human beings to relate with one another. A theory for this will only come about when the general human element given in anthroposophical spiritual science is made the foundation.”¹²

It remains to say a little bit more about *how* such brotherhoods, working ‘behind the scenes’, are able to influence the actions and events of public and political life. (Steiner’s earlier comments, though, about Lord Rosebery are certainly very revealing concerning this.)

In a different lecture Steiner describes how what was put out by these “secret societies” or “occult schools” first: “*seeped* (hineinsickerte) into all the brotherhoods, even the more esoteric ones — those who worked in the West as so-called high grade Freemasons and suchlike.”

From there (and again it is worth reading closely Steiner’s description):

“These things were insinuated into public affairs by people who had either a close or loose connection with these brotherhoods, often in such a veiled way that those concerned had no idea how they had come by their knowledge.”

“What was known in those circles (...) flows into the instincts behind those persons who occupy positions as political representatives, even if they act only out of political instincts. Behind these are the forces to which I am now referring. You need not inquire, therefore, whether Northcliffe or even Lloyd George is initiated to one degree or another into these forces. This is not what counts. The decisive question is whether or not there is a possibility that they may conduct themselves in accordance with these forces. They need to take up in their instincts alone what runs parallel with these forces. But there is such a possibility; this does happen, and these forces act in the general direction of world history.”¹³

FROM THE FIRST WORLD WAR TO 9/11

All of this is also highly relevant with regard to what lies behind the events of 9/11.

It is possible, I think, to show something like an unbroken thread running from the occult, political machinations Steiner was pointing to behind the events of the First World War, through the main political directions of the rest of the 20th Century, right up to the beginning of the 21st Century, and the events of September 11th, 2001.

It hardly takes much insight, for example, to note the obvious connection between what we have

been saying about groups with one-sided Anglo-American aims and agendas and the intentions of the group that has so often been referred to in relation to 9/11 – the *Project for a New American Century*. (PNAC)¹⁴

It would need a whole book to explore this in detail. I hope that this short article, however, has at least broached the themes that future research could examine much more thoroughly.

Looking to the year ahead, I can do little better than utter the hope and wish expressed by Steiner immediately after the last long passage I quoted from – (changing his second word, however, from “your” to “our”):

“May our hearts strive to see things in their true guise. Only if hearts exist which see things in their true guise and penetrate that terrible fog of untruth which shrouds everything in the world today, can we progress in an appropriate way.”¹⁵

I would like to add, though, that there *are* more and more people today who are striving to see things “in their true guise” – very often unaware of what Steiner’s work is able to contribute to this. My hope is that many of them may be able to become aware of this – which can prove a huge blessing to such endeavours, shedding enormous light on it all and providing vast illumination and insight into the true, spiritual possibilities that the opposing powers are trying to thwart.

As a corollary to this, people who already have a spiritual or even an anthroposophical view of the world sometimes seem to overlook the need “to see things in their true guise.” I hope this too can increasingly be taken on, thus enabling us ever more fruitfully and creatively to “progress in an appropriate way.”

Finally, here are a few lines of a poem¹⁶ by the Welsh poet Vernon Watkins (1906-1967) written in the middle of last century:

*The penumbra of history is terrible.
Life changes, breaks, scatters. There is no sheet-anchor.
Time reigns; yet the kingdom of love is every moment,
Whose citizens do not age in each other’s eyes.
In a time of darkness the pattern of life is restored
By men who make all transience seem an illusion
Through inward acts, acts corresponding to music.
Their works of love leave words that do not end in the heart.*

Endnotes

1. From a lecture by Rudolf Steiner on 1st December, 1918 in: *The Challenge of the Times*. (GA 186)
2. Richard Cobden (1804-1865); English political economist; advocate of free trade, peace, disarmament.
3. John Bright (1811-1889); English Quaker, politician, minister.
4. Quotation from: *Karma of Untruthfulness I: Lecture Two*; Rudolf Steiner; Dornach, December 9th, 1916 (GA 173).
5. “That which people know about all sorts of Higher Orders of Scottish Freemasonry and so on, are actually only the outer aspects, which are shown to the world. But behind these there really stand extensive working occult schools, which have taken up into themselves ancient occult traditions and ancient occult streams...” From lecture of 28th March, 1916, in GA 167. (Available – though in an incomplete translation - at the ‘Rudolf Steiner Archive’ website.)
6. At the time Rudolf Steiner gave these lectures (1916) the one-sided intentions of these groups were mainly *Anglo-Saxon* in character. Since that time, of course, these intentions may be said to have become *Anglo-American*.

7. Archibald Primrose, 5th Earl of Rosebery (1847-1929). British Foreign Minister 1886 and 1882; Prime Minister 1894/1895. For an excellent and thorough article on Lord Rosebery, his influence, and the influence of his political circle as a whole, see: *Sir Edward Grey, Liberal Imperialism and the Question of British Responsibility for the First World War - From the British Empire to the American Empire* by Terry Boardman, available at: www.threeman.org
8. Quotation from: *Karma of Untruthfulness I: Lecture Four*; Rudolf Steiner; Dornach, December 11th, 1916 (GA 173).
9. Quotation from: *Karma of Untruthfulness II: Lecture Twenty*. Rudolf Steiner. Dornach, January 15th, 1917. (GA 174)
10. In order to do this they need, in fact, to deliberately bypass and subvert the very principles of 'freedom' and 'democracy' they claim to be upholding. Should these principles genuinely be adhered to, this would obviously completely hinder them carrying out their intentions. Steiner therefore comments: "The extraordinary situation is: that for certain impulses which stem from western Europe the political thinking of English culture must be regarded as the least suitable instrument." (Same reference as note 7.)
11. This can put us in the strange situation of needing to stand firmly against what is issuing from the English-speaking world in order to stand up for the true qualities and possibilities of the English-speaking world.
12. See note 8.
13. See note 1.
14. Sevak Gulbekian has written extremely well on the possible relationships between the kinds of group Rudolf Steiner is referring to and more publically recognizable groups, which nonetheless have a closed or semi-secret character, of which the PNAC would be an example. (See the article: 'A Perspective on Conspiracies' by Sevak Gulbekian in *New Dawn* magazine, available online.)
15. See note 9.
16. From: *Taliesin and the Spring of Vision in New Selected Poems of Vernon Watkins*. (Carcenet, 2006).

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