



MYSTICS OF THE RENAISSANCE

RUDOLF STEINER

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**MYSTICS OF THE
RENAISSANCE**

**BY
RUDOLF STEINER**

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of Nature such as Ernst Haeckel's, only he can lose himself amid shallows who himself approaches it with a shallow thought-world. I feel something higher, more glorious, when I let the revelations of the "natural history of creation" work upon me, than when the supernatural miracle stories of the confessions of faith force themselves upon me. In no "holy book" do I know aught that unveils for me anything as lofty as the "sober" fact, that every human germ in the mother's womb repeats in brief, one after the other, those animal types which its animal ancestors have passed through. If only we fill our hearts with the glory of the facts that our senses behold, then we shall have little left over for "wonders" which do not lie in the course of Nature. If we experience the Spirit in ourselves, then we have no need of such in external Nature.

In my *Philosophy of Freedom*, (Berlin, 1894) I have described my view of the world, which has no thought of driving out the Spirit, because it beholds Nature as Darwin and Haeckel beheld her. A plant, an animal, gains nothing for me if I people it with souls of which my senses give me no information. I do not seek in the external world for a "deeper," "more soulful" being of things; nay, I do not even assume it, because I believe that the insight which shines forth for me in my inner being guards me against it. I believe that the things of the sense-world are, in fact, just as they present themselves to us, because I see that a right self-knowledge leads us to this: that in Nature we should seek nothing but natural processes. I seek no Spirit of God in Nature, because I believe that I perceive the nature of the human spirit in myself. I calmly admit my animal ancestry, because I believe myself to know that there, where these animal ancestors have their origin, no spirit of like nature with soul can work. I can only agree with Ernst Haeckel when he prefers the "eternal rest of the grave" to an immortality such as is taught by some religions.²⁴ For I find a dishonouring of Spirit, an ugly sin against the Spirit, in the conception of a soul continuing to exist after the manner of a sensible being.

I hear a shrill discord when the scientific facts in Haeckel's presentation come up against the "piety" of the confessions of some of our contemporaries. But for me there rings out from confessions of faith, which give a discord with natural facts, naught of the spirit of the higher

²⁴ Cp. Haeckel's Riddle of the Universe

