

The Moment of Death and the Period Thereafter

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Translator Unknown

The time in which we live reminds us daily and hourly of death, this significant event in human life; it reminds us of man's passage through the portal of death. For only in the light of spiritual science does death become a real event in the true meaning of the word, because spiritual science shows us the eternal forces that are active within us, that pass through births and deaths and take on a special form of existence between birth and death, in order to assume another form of existence after their passage through the portal of death. In the light of spiritual science, death becomes an event, instead of being merely the abstract end of life (only a materialistic world-conception can look upon death as the end of life); it becomes a deep and serious event within the whole compass of human life. Even from our own ranks, dear friends of ours have left us in order to pass through the portal of death, chiefly as a result of the present historical events, but also for other reasons, and so it may perhaps be particularly appropriate just now to say a few things on death, on this great event, and on the facts of human life that are connected with it.

Explanations have often been given in our spiritual-scientific lectures on the life between death and a new birth, so that we were able to gain many essential facts, particularly in regard to this subject. The course which spiritual science has followed up to now will have shown you that in every single case it can only speak of things from one definite standpoint, so that a more accurate knowledge can gradually be acquired by speaking of things repeatedly and throwing light upon them from many points of view. Today I shall therefore add to the facts that you already know in connection with this subject a few things that may be useful to our comprehension of the world as a whole.

Through spiritual science, we consider, to begin with (and that is a good thing), the human being such as he stands before us, here in the physical world, as an expression of his whole being. We must depart first of all from the manner in which the human being presents himself to us in the physical world; and for this reason, I have frequently pointed out that we obtain, as it were, a general view of man's whole being if we contemplate him so that we first take, as a foundation, his physical body which we learn to know externally in the physical world through our senses and the scientific dissection of what we perceive through the senses. We then proceed by studying that form of organization which we designate as our etheric body: this already possesses a super-sensible character and cannot, therefore, be contemplated with the aid of the ordinary intellect, which is bound to the brain, and is consequently also

inaccessible to our ordinary science. The etheric body is an organism having a super-sensible character, concerning which we may say that it was already known to men such as Immanuel Hermann Fichte, son of the great thinker Johann Gottlieb Fichte, to Troxler and others. Indeed, man's etheric body can only be grasped through imaginative knowledge owing to its super-sensible character; but as far as imaginative knowledge is concerned, it *can* be contemplated externally, just as the physical-sensory body can be contemplated externally through our ordinary sensory knowledge.

We then ascend in our contemplation to the astral body. The astral body in man cannot be contemplated in an external-sensory manner in the same way in which we contemplate the physical body through our external senses, or in the same way in which we contemplate our etheric body through our inner sense; the astral body is something that can only be experienced inwardly. We must experience it inwardly, and in order to experience it we must be within it. The same thing applies to the fourth member which must be grasped in the physical world, to the ego. With these four members of human nature we build up our whole being.

Past lectures showed us that what we designate as man's physical body is a very complicated structure, formed during long periods of development, that passed through the stages of Saturn, the Sun and the Moon; also the evolution of the Earth contributed to this development of the physical body, from the very beginning of earthly existence up to our time. A complicated process of development therefore built up our physical body.

That form of contemplation which is, to begin with, accessible to us in the physical world merely sees the external aspect of everything that lives within the physical body. Even ordinary science merely sees this external aspect. We might say: our ordinary physical contemplation and ordinary science, in the form in which it now lives in the world, merely know of the physical body as much as we would know of a house if we would only go round it outside, without ever going inside, so that we would never learn to know what it is like inside, nor what people live in it.

Of course, those who stand upon the foundation of ordinary science, in the usual materialistic meaning, will argue: 'We are thoroughly acquainted with the interior of the physical body! We know what it is like, because we have frequently studied the brain inside the skull when dissecting corpses; we have frequently studied the stomach and the heart.' This interior, however, that can thus be studied from outside, this spatial interior, is not what I mean when I speak of man's inner being. Even this spatial interior is nothing but an external thing. Indeed, in the case of the physical body, this spatial interior is far more external than the real spatial interior.

This must sound strange. But our sense-organs — you know this from other descriptions contained in our spiritual science were formed already during the Saturn period and we carry them on the surface

of our body. Spatially speaking, they are outside. Nevertheless, they were built by forces that are far more spiritual than those that formed our stomach or everything that exists, spatially speaking, inside our body. What is inside our body is built up by the least spiritual of forces. Strange though it may sound, I must nevertheless point out that we really speak of ourselves in an entirely mistaken manner upside down, we might say. Since we live on the physical plane, it is natural to speak in that way; nevertheless the way in which we speak of ourselves is quite wrong. We should really designate the skin of our face as our interior, and the stomach as our exterior. This would lead us far closer to the truth! It would lead us closer to the real truth if we were to say: we eat in such a way that we send the food out of us; when we send food into our stomach, we really send it out, we do not send it into our body, as we generally say at the present time. The more our organs lie on the surface, the more spiritual are the forces from which they come; and the more they lie inside our body, the less spiritual are the forces that gave rise to them.

The descriptions that were given so far in our spiritual science enable you to grasp this with a certain ease. If you carefully remember the descriptions of spiritual science, you will no doubt remember what it says in regard to the Moon stage of development, namely, that something split off during the Moon stage of development, and that something also split off during the Earth-development; it went out into the world's spaces from the Saturn, Sun and Moon stages of development. A very strange thing is connected with this splitting-off process, namely, we were turned inside out! Our inside became, our outside and our outside became our inside. During the Saturn and Sun periods, our human countenance, which is now turned towards the outer world, was really turned towards our inner being. Of course, this was only the case during the early stages of development; but even during a part of the Moon period, during the Moon existence, the foundation of the inner organs which we now possess was still formed from outside. Since that time, we have really been turned inside out, like an overcoat that can be turned. We should bear in mind that many super-sensible facts are connected with our physical body. Its whole structure is super-sensible; the super-sensible world has formed it, and when we look upon the physical body as a whole, it merely shows us its external aspect.

If we now come to the etheric body, we shall find that it is neither visible nor accessible to the physical-sensory contemplation. But when the human being passes through the portal of death, it becomes all the more important. The time through which the human being now passes, the first days after his death, are particularly important as far as the etheric body is concerned. But we must learn to think differently, even in regard to the physical body, if we wish to grasp in the right way all that we encounter after our passage through the portal of death.

You already know (for you can observe this even in the physical world) that when we pass through the portal of death we lay aside our physical body, as we generally say. We lay aside our physical body. Through decomposition or cremation (the only difference between these two processes lies in the

length of time that they take up) the physical body is handed over to the elements of the earth. Now we might think that the physical body simply ceases to exist for those who have passed through the portal of death. But this is not the case, in this meaning. For we can hand over to the earth only those parts of our physical body that come from the earth itself. We cannot, however, hand over to the earth that part of our physical body that comes from the Old Moon existence, nor that part which comes from the Old Sun existence or from the Old Saturn existence. For those parts that come from the Old Saturn existence, from the Sun existence, from the Moon existence, and even from a great portion of the Earth existence, are super-sensible forces. These super-sensible forces contained in our physical body, of which only the external part is accessible to our sensory contemplation, as explained just now — where do these super-sensible forces go to after we have passed through the portal of death? As stated, we hand over to the earth, we return to the earth, only that part of our physical body — of that most wonderful structure which exists in the world, to begin with, as a form — we return to the earth only what the earth has given to the physical body. And where is the other part when we have passed through the portal of death? The other part withdraws from the one that sinks down into the earth, as it were, through the process of decomposition or cremation; the other part is taken up by the whole universe.

If you now think of everything you can at all imagine in the environment of the earth, including the planets and the fixed stars, if you imagine this in the most spiritual form, this spiritually conceived idea would give you the place where the spiritual part of our physical body abides after death. Only a portion of this spiritual part, a portion contained in the element of warmth, separates and remains with the earth. But every other spiritual part of our physical body is borne out into the spaces of the universe, into the whole cosmos.

Where do we go to when we abandon our physical body? Where do we dive down? Through our death, we go out with lightning speed into that which forms our physical body from out of all the super-sensible forces. Imagine that all the constructive forces that have worked upon your physical body, ever since the time of Old Saturn, were to stretch themselves into infinity in order to prepare the place in which you live between death and a new birth. Between birth and death, all this is drawn together, I might say, within the space enclosed by your skin; it is merely drawn together.

When we are outside our physical body, we experience something that is of the utmost importance for the whole subsequent life between death and a new birth. I have often mentioned this. This experience is of opposite character to the corresponding experience during our life here, upon the physical plane. During our life upon the physical plane we cannot look back as far as the hour of our birth; we cannot look back upon it with the aid of our ordinary cognitive power. There is not one person who can remember his own birth, nor look back upon it. The only thing we know is that we were born, in the first place, because we have been told so by others, and in the second place, because all the other human

beings that came to the earth after us were also born, so that we infer from this that we, too, were born. But we cannot pass through the real experience of our own birth.

Exactly the opposite is the case with the corresponding experience after death. Whereas, during our physical life, the immediate contemplation of our birth can never rise up before our soul, the moment of death stands before our soul throughout our life between death and a new birth, if we only look upon it spiritually. We must realize that we then look upon the moment of death from the other side. Here, on earth, death has a terrifying aspect only because we look upon it as a kind of dissolution, as an end. But when we look back upon the moment of death from the other side, from the spiritual side, then death continually appears to us as a victory of the spirit, as the Spirit that is extricating itself from the physical. It then appears as the greatest, most beautiful and significant event. Moreover, this experience kindles that which constitutes our ego-consciousness after death. Throughout the time between death and a new birth we have an ego-consciousness that not only resembles but far exceeds that which we have here during our physical life. We would not have this ego-consciousness if we could not look back incessantly, if we would not always see — but from the other side, from the spiritual side — that moment in which our spiritual part extricated itself from the physical. We know that we are an ego only because we know that we have died, that our spiritual has freed itself from our physical part. When we cannot contemplate the moment of death, beyond the portal of death, then our ego-consciousness after death is in the same case as our physical ego-consciousness here upon the earth when we are asleep. Just as we know nothing of our physical ego-consciousness when we are asleep, so we know nothing concerning ourselves after death if we do not constantly have before us the moment of death. It stands before us as one of the most beautiful and loftiest moments.

You see, even in this case we must set about thinking in an entirely different way of the spiritual world than of the sensory-physical world. If we indolently remain with the thoughts which we have in connection with the physical-sensory world, it will be impossible for us to grasp the spiritual in any way more precisely. For the most important thing after death is that the moment of death is viewed from the other side. This kindles our ego-consciousness on the other side. Here, in the physical world, we have, as it were, one side of ego-consciousness; after death, we have the other side of ego-consciousness. I explained just now where we should look for the super-sensible part of our physical body after death. We should seek this physical body in the shape of a relation of forces, of an organism of forces, as a cosmos of forces, within the whole world. This physical essence prepares the place through which we must pass between death and a new birth.

Within our physical body, which is so small in comparison with the whole world, our skin really encloses a microcosm, something that is, in reality, a whole world. Trivially speaking, I might say that this world is merely rolled together and that afterwards it unrolls again and fills out the universe, with the exception of one tiny space that always remains empty.

Between death and a new birth we really exist everywhere in the world; we live in it with that part which, here on earth, lies at the foundation of our physical body in the form of super-sensible forces. We are everywhere, except in that one place. This remains empty. It is the space enclosed by our skin, the space which we take up in the physical world. This remains empty.

Yet we constantly look upon this empty space. That is to say, we look upon our own self, from outside; we look into a concavity. This remains empty. It remains empty to such an extent that a fundamental feeling rises up in connection with it. Namely, we do not contemplate things in an abstract manner, we do not simply stare at them, but our contemplation is connected with a powerful inner life-experience, with a mighty experience. It is connected with the fact that when we contemplate this emptiness, a feeling rises up in us, a feeling that accompanies us throughout our life between death and a new birth and constitutes a great deal of what we generally designate as our life beyond. It is the feeling that there is something in the world which must again and again be filled out by us. And then we acquire the feeling: 'I exist in the world for a definite purpose, which I, alone, can fulfil.' Thus we learn to know our place within the world. We feel that we are building stones, without which the world could not exist. This is what arises through the contemplation of that empty space. When we gaze at it, we are overcome by a feeling telling us that we stand within the world as something that forms part of it.

All this is connected with the further development of our physical body. The more elementary forms of description only enable us to explain schematically, as it were, a reality of the spiritual world that really requires to be explained in the form of images. In order to rise gradually to those concepts which penetrate more deeply into the reality of the spiritual world, we must first have those images.

We know that our next experience is a kind of retrospective memory that lasts for days. But this retrospective memory is inappropriately designated (but nevertheless with a certain right) as a retrospective memory, for we have before us now, for a few days, something that resembles a tableau, or a panorama, woven out of all we have experienced during our past life. It does not, however, rise up in the same way in which an ordinary memory rises up in our physical body. You see, the memories that live in our physical body are of such a kind that we draw them out of our memory. Memory is a force that is connected with our physical body. Our recollections rise up in the form of thoughts; through the power of memory we draw them out successively within the stream of time. But the retrospective memory after death is of such a kind that everything that occurred during our early life now surrounds us simultaneously, as if it were a panorama. Our life-experiences now rise up in the form of imaginations. We can only say that we now live, for whole days, within these experiences. What we experienced just before death and what we experienced during our childhood stand before us simultaneously in powerful pictures. A panorama of our life, a life-picture, stands before us and it reveals, simultane-

ously, in a woof woven out of the ether, what normally occurs successively within the stream of time. Everything that we now see before us lives in the ether.

We feel, above all, that we are now surrounded by something that is alive. Everything within it lives and weaves. And then we experience that it resounds spiritually, that it shines forth spiritually and gives warmth spiritually.

We know that this life-tableau disappears after a few days. What makes it cease and what is the essence of this life-tableau?

If we study the true essence of this life-tableau, we must really say: everything that we have experienced during our life is woven into it. How did we experience these things? In the form of thoughts connected with our experiences. Everything that we experienced in the form of thoughts and concepts is contained in this picture of our life.

In order to grasp this concretely, let us now say: during our earthly life we lived together with another human being, we spoke with him and, in speaking with him, his thoughts communicated with our thoughts. We received love from him, we allowed his soul to influence us and experienced all this inwardly. In this manner we shared the experiences of the person we lived with. He lived and we lived, and through him we experienced something. What we experienced through him now appears to us woven into this etheric life-tableau. It is the same thing that constitutes our memories. Think, for instance, of the moment, ten or twenty years ago, when you first met him and experienced something through him. Imagine that this memory now rises up before you, but that you do not remember it in the same way in which you would remember things during your ordinary life. The ordinary memories are grey and faded, but now you remember things in such a way that they rise up within you as LIVING memories; you see your friend standing before you in exactly the same way in which he stood before you during the real experience.

Here, on earth, we are often very dreamy and what we experience upon the physical plane in a living and hearty manner becomes dulled and loses its vitality. But when we pass through the portal of death, when our experiences rise up before us in the life-tableau, they are no longer dull and lifeless but exist there in the original freshness and vitality which they possessed when we passed through them during our earthly life. In this form they become interwoven with our life-tableau; in this form we experience them after death for whole days.

In regard to the physical world, we have the impression that our physical body falls away from us when we die; in a similar way we now have the impression that our etheric body too falls away from us after a certain number of days, but it does not fall away from us in the same way in which our physical body falls away, for it becomes interwoven with the whole universe, with the whole world. It lives

in the world and stamps its impressions upon the whole world while we are experiencing our life-tableau. What we thus have before us in the form of a life-tableau has now been handed over to the external world: it lives in our surroundings and has been taken over by the world.

During those days we have an important and impressive experience in this connection. For, after death, our experiences do not merely resemble the memories which we have during our earthly life but they are in every way substance for new experiences. Even the manner in which we grasp our ego, through the fact that we constantly look back upon our death, is a new experience, for our earthly senses do not enable us to experience anything similar. This can only be grasped through the knowledge of initiation. But even what we experience during the days in which we are surrounded by this life-tableau, by this etheric life that frees itself from us and becomes interwoven with the universe, even what we experience in this manner is impressive and lofty, it is an overwhelming and powerful experience for the human soul.

You see, during our physical life on earth, we face the world: we face the mineral, vegetable, animal and human kingdoms. They enable us to experience what our senses are able to experience, what our intellect, that is bound to the brain, obtains through the sense-experiences, what our feelings, that are connected with our vascular system, experience: we experience all these things here on earth.

But in reality, and from a loftier standpoint, we human beings are extremely great dunces (excuse this expression!), gigantic dunces, between birth and death. In regard to the wisdom of the great world, we are fearfully stupid if we believe that here on earth, when we experience something in the manner described and bear it along in the form of memories, everything is finished; we are fearfully stupid if we think that our experiences are finished when we take them up in this manner as human beings. For while we experience things, while we form concepts and feelings rise up in our experiences, the whole world of the Hierarchies is active within this process through which we acquire our experiences; the Hierarchies live and weave in it.

When we face a human being and look into his eyes, then the spirits of the Hierarchies, the Hierarchies themselves, the work of the Hierarchies, live in our gaze and in what is sent towards us through the gaze of the other human being. Our experience merely shows us the external aspect of things for, in reality, the Gods work within our experiences. We think that we only live for our own sake; yet the Gods work out something through our experiences; they obtain from them something that they can weave into the world. We form ideas, we have feeling experiences; the Gods take them up and communicate them to their world. And when we die, we know that the purpose of our life is to give the Gods the opportunity to spin out of our life this woof coming from our etheric body and to hand it over to the whole universe. The Gods gave us the chance to live in order that they might spin out something for themselves, thus enriching the world.

This is an overwhelming thought. Every one of our strides is the external expression of an event connected with the Gods; it forms part of that woof which the Gods use for their plan of the world and which they leave to us only until we pass through the portal of death. After our death they take it away from us and incorporate with the universe these, our human, destinies. Our human destinies are, at the same time, the deeds of Gods, and the form in which they appear to us human beings is merely their outward aspect. This is the significant, important and essential fact which we should bear in mind.

What we acquire inwardly, during our earthly life, through the fact that we can think and have feelings, whom does this belong to after our death? Whom does it now belong to? After our death it belongs to the universe. We look back upon our death, and in the same way we now look back with that part which remains to us, namely, with our astral body and our ego, upon that which has become interwoven with the universe, with the world. During our earthly life we bear within us what thus becomes interwoven with the universe after our death; we bear it within us as our etheric body. But now it is spun up and becomes interwoven with the world. And we now look upon it, we contemplate it. After our death, we look upon it in the same way in which we experience it inwardly here on earth. It now lives in the world outside. Just as here on earth we see stars, mountains, rivers, so after our death we see, in addition to what our physical body has become with lightning speed, also that part of our own experiences which has become interwoven with the universe. That part of our own experiences which now incorporates with the whole world-structure is reflected in those members which we still possess, in our astral body and in our ego; it is reflected in the same way in which the external world is reflected here on earth in our physical organs and through our physical being.

While this is reflected in us we acquire something that we cannot acquire during our earthly life, something that we shall only acquire later on, during the Jupiter period, in the form of a more external, physical impression. Now we acquire it spiritually, through the fact that our etheric being outside makes an impression upon us. This impression which is thus made upon us is, to begin with, a spiritual one; it is made in the form of images; in its image-character it is, however, the prototype of what we shall one day possess upon Jupiter: namely, the Spirit-Self.

A Spirit-Self is therefore born to us through the fact that our etheric part becomes interwoven with the universe; this Spirit-Self comes to birth spiritually, not in the form in which we shall have it later on, upon Jupiter.

The etheric body has now detached itself, so that we now have the astral body, the ego and the Spirit-Self.

The astral body and the ego therefore remain to us from our earthly life.

You already know that our astral body, in the earthly form in which it was subjected to us, remains with us for a long time after death. The astral body remains with us because it is permeated with all those things that only pertain to the earthly-human life, and because it cannot immediately expel this. We now pass through a time during which we can only cast off little by little what has become of our astral body as a result of our earthly life.

You see, here on earth we can only experience, in regard to the astral body, one half at the most of everything through which we pass. We really experience only half of what takes place in every one of our experiences. Let us take an example. Imagine — this applies both to good and to evil thoughts and actions — but let us take as an example an evil action. Imagine that you say something bad to another person and that your words hurt him. When we say something unkind we only experience that part which concerns us personally; we only experience the feelings that prompted us to say those evil words. This is the soul-impression which we gather when we say bad and unkind things. But the other person to whom we addressed our unkind words has an entirely different impression; he has, as it were, the other half of the impression and feels hurt. The second half of the impression lives in him. What we ourselves experience during our physical life on earth is one thing, and what the other person experiences is another thing.

Now imagine the following. After our death, when we pass backwards through our life, we must once more live through everything that other people, outside, have experienced through us. As we go backwards through our life, we experience the effects of our thoughts and actions. Between death and a new birth we therefore pass through our life by going through it backwards. And when we have gone back as far as our birth, we are ripe for the moment when also that part of our astral body may be cast off which is permeated with earthly things. It abandons us, and a new state of existence begins for us when we have cast off our astral body.

The astral body always kept us connected, I might say, with the earth; it maintained this connection in all our experiences. When we pass through our astral body — not in a dreamy condition, but by living through our earthly experiences backwards — we are still connected with our earthly life; we still stand within our earthly existence. Now that we have cast off — but this is not the right expression; it is, however, impossible to use another one — now that we have cast off our astral body, we are quite free of all that pertains to the earth and we live in the real spiritual world.

A new experience now sets in. This casting-off of the astral body is, again, merely one aspect of the whole experience; the other aspect is an entirely different one. When we have passed through our earthly experiences and no longer have our astral body, we feel, as it were, inwardly filled and permeated with — we cannot say with material — but with spirit; then we really feel that we are in the spiritual world and the spiritual world rises up within us. In former times it rose up before us in the outer

world when we contemplated the universe and saw our own etheric body interwoven with the universe. But now it rises up within us; we now experience it inwardly. And our ego rises up within us as a prototype of what we shall possess physically only upon Venus; our ego rises up as a prototype of the Life-Spirit.

We now consist of Spirit-Self, Life-Spirit and ego.

Just as here on earth we live in a rather dreamy state from our birth until that moment of our childhood in which we acquire self-consciousness, which is the earliest moment of life that we can recall, so we now lead a form of life that is fully conscious, indeed more conscious and higher than our earthly life. However, we experience a purely spiritual life, only when we have detached ourselves from our astral body, from our astral life, retaining only that part of our astral which permeates us inwardly. Consequently, we are, from that time onwards, spirits among spirits.

Now another important and essential experience rises up. During our life in the physical world we carry on our work, do this or that thing and have experiences in connection with all these things. Our experiences are, however, not limited to the physical world; simultaneously and in connection with them, we also experience something else. Although the expression which I shall now use for these simultaneous experiences is just an ordinary, more general expression, let me nevertheless use this word; while we experience these things, we grow tired, we get used up. This is constantly the case: we grow tired. Although our weariness is eliminated for our next state of consciousness through the fact that we sleep, or rather, through the fact that we rest during our sleep, this elimination, or adjustment, is nevertheless only a partial one, for we know, of course, that during our life we gradually become used up, we grow older, and our strength gradually dwindles. Consequently, we also grow tired in a wider sense. When we grow older, we know that we cannot adjust everything by sleeping. Thus we wear out our strength, we grow tired, during our life on earth.

Indeed, we are now able to view this problem from another aspect. After our preceding explanation, we can now advance this problem in a different way; we can ask: why do the Gods allow us to grow weary? The fact that here on earth we get tired and wear out our strength gives us something that is really most significant for our whole life. Let us, however, grasp the idea that we get tired, in a wider sense than the usual one. Let us place it clearly before our soul.

You will grasp it best of all if you imagine it in the following way. Ask any one of those present: do you know anything concerning the interior of your head? Probably only a person who is suffering from a headache would answer that at the present moment he does know something concerning the interior of his head. He alone would feel what the inside of his head is like; all the others would not feel it.

We can feel our organs only when they are not quite in order; we are then to some extent aware of their existence through our feelings. As a rule, we only have a more general feeling of our physical body, and this feeling increases when anything is out of order. But when we only have this general feeling, we know very little concerning the interior of our body. Those who suffer from bad headaches know a little more concerning the inside of their head than an anatomist, who is merely acquainted with the head's vessels. In growing more and more tired, during the course of our life, we acquire an ever stronger feeling in regard to the body's interior, its spatial interior.

Consider the fact that the more weary we grow, the more the infirmities of life arise, for instance the infirmities of old age. Our life consists in that we gradually begin to feel and to sense our physical body. We learn to sense this physical part of our being because it becomes hardened within us and because it pushes itself, as it were, into our being. Just because it develops so slowly we regard it, I might say, as an insignificant feeling. Its real significance could be gauged if we could feel (excuse this trivial expression, but it conveys what I wish to say) in the pink of health, like an exuberantly healthy child, and immediately afterwards, for the sake of comparison, like an old man of 80 or 85, whose limbs have grown fragile. This would enable us to experience that feeling more strongly, simply because it develops so slowly. Yet growing weary is a real process. At first, it does not exist at all, for a child is full of exuberant vitality. But later on, fatigue gradually begins to drown the vital forces, and then the process of getting tired breaks through. We have the possibility of growing weary, and during this process (even though it only gives us, let us say, a dim feeling of our body's inner structure), during this process something takes place within us, something really takes place within us.

Our life in the physical world only shows us the outer aspect of deep, significant and lofty mysteries. The fact that this dim, insignificant feeling of growing weary accompanies us throughout our life, so that we are able to feel the inner structure of our body, is merely the outer aspect of something that becomes interwoven with us; it is wonderfully woven out of pure wisdom, a complete woof of pure wisdom.

While we thus grow weary during our life and begin to experience ourselves inwardly, a delicate knowledge becomes interwoven with us, a knowledge of the wonderful constitution of our organs, of our inner organs. Our heart grows tired, yet this weariness means that a knowledge of the heart's structure becomes interwoven with us, a knowledge of how the heart is built from out of the universe. Our stomach gets tired — most of all, when we spoil it by eating too much — yet during this process that tires the stomach, an image of wisdom from out of the cosmos is woven into us, and this image shows us how the stomach is built up.

The lofty, wonderful structure of our organism, of this great work of art, arises within us in the form of an image. But this image only comes to life when we cast off that part of our astral body which is

bound to the earth. What now lives within us, what now fills us as Life-Spirit, is the wisdom connected with our own being, it is the wisdom connected with the wonderful structure of our inner being and this wisdom now lives in us.

Now begins a time in which we compare, as it were, what fills us in the form of Life-Spirit from out of the wisdom of our inner being with the etheric woof that has already been woven into the universe. Our task is now to compare how one thing fits in with the other, and we then build up, in the form of an image, our inner being, we give it the shape which it should have during our next incarnation.

This is how we begin, but little by little our life approaches the Midnight, which you will find described in one of the Mystery Plays, in *The Soul's Awakening*. Particularly after the World-Midnight we are engaged in a work that consists in that we now participate in the world's creative work; we call into life what we afterwards enjoy here. During our life between death and a new birth we share in the work, we participate in the weaving of the Gods' images. We have the privilege of sharing in a divine task, in what the Gods aimed at when they placed man into the world. We are allowed to prepare our next incarnation.

Of course, this is not only connected with processes that exclusively and egoistically concern our own being, for all manner of other processes take place as well. This may be evident particularly from the following:

If we gradually succeed in experiencing, in spiritual contemplation, this wonderful process — which is, above all, far higher than the one which takes place on earth, when summer and winter alternate, or when the sun rises and sets and when all that takes place which occurs in the form of earthly work — then something occurs in the spiritual world finally leading to our earthly incarnation, to human existence. This is a lofty, heavenly process, which has not only an external significance but a deep significance for the whole world.

We also encounter something else when we contemplate this process. It may sound strange to say this but, you see, the higher mysteries at first necessarily appear strange in the light of a physical-sensory contemplation. What rises up before our soul in connection with these mysteries must move us. The more it moves us, the better it is, for these things, the very nature of these things, should not approach our soul so that we remain dry and indifferent. They should not be taken up in such a way that we remain indifferent, dry and cool; but they should, instead, give us a soul-impression of the loftiness and greatness of the divine-spiritual world.

We can say: if anybody would undertake to present a spiritual science in such a dry way that it does not take hold of our whole being, and so that we do not gain an impression of the loftiness and greatness of the divine-spiritual that pulses and weaves through the world — if, after all these descriptions,

we would live on indifferently and dryly, then we would be born without heads, in accordance with the present conditions of the world and in spite of everything we know! We would be born without heads! The structure of our head is something that we are unable to build. In its whole structure the human head is such a lofty image of the universe that the human being would be unable to form it, even with the aid of that life-wisdom which is woven into him; he would be unable to prepare it for the next incarnation. All the divine Hierarchies must co-operate in this work. Your head, this slightly irregular and somewhat transformed sphere, is a real microcosm, a true image of the great world-sphere. Within it lives, within it is collected, everything that exists outside in the universe. All the forces that are active in the different Hierarchies co-operate in order to produce the head. And when we begin to shape our next incarnation, from out the wisdom which we collected during the process of growing weary, all the Hierarchies co-operate and influence this activity in order to embody in us, as an image of the whole wisdom of the Gods, what afterwards becomes our head.

While all this occurs, our physical, hereditary stream is being prepared generations ahead here upon the earth. Just as after our death we can only hand over to the earth what comes from the earth, so our parents and grand-parents only give us that part of our being which pertains to the earth. Our earthly part is merely our exterior; it is merely the external expression within this earthly part. Woven into it is, in the first place, everything that we ourselves are able to weave in the manner described, and what all the Hierarchies of the Gods weave, before we gain a connection (through conception) with that which enwraps us and clothes us about when we enter the physical plane.

I explained to you that the more of this lofty knowledge we take up in our feelings the better it will be for us. Just consider the fact: we use our head. In so far as we live in materialism, we generally have not the slightest idea that whole Hierarchies of Gods are at work in order to produce our head, in order to mould that which lies, spiritually, at the foundation of our head, so that we are able to live. If we grasp this, in the meaning of a spiritual-scientific knowledge, it will spontaneously be filled with feelings of gratitude and thankfulness towards the whole universe.

Consequently, what we acquire through spiritual science should incessantly continue to increase and raise our feelings. In the sphere of spiritual science, our sentient life should more and more hold pace with our cognitive work. It is not good to remain behind with our feelings. Whenever we learn to know a new and higher portion of spiritual science, we should be able to unfold, I might say, more and more reverent feelings towards the world's mysteries, which finally lead to the mysteries of man. A true progress in spiritual science really lies in this purifying, spiritual warmth of our feelings.

Let me mention one more thing, because it completes all that we have contemplated in this lecture. Here, in the physical world, we gradually grow accustomed to life by having, to begin with, the dull consciousness of childhood. At first we only recognize our mother and, little by little, we learn to

know other people. As we grow accustomed to life in the physical world, we believe that we are constantly coming across new people. As far as our physical consciousness is concerned this is, in fact, true. But when we pass through the portal of death we have a real, true connection with all the souls that we encountered during our earthly life. They rise up again before our spiritual eye. The souls with whom we were connected during our earthly life and that crossed the portal of death before us, we find these souls, as it were. The words 'to find' really applies to physical conditions, but we may use it here to define that living way in which souls approach other souls. This 'finding' of the souls that crossed the portal of death before us should, however, be imagined in such a way that we approach them, as it were, in an opposite manner from the one in which we approach human beings here on the physical plane.

On the physical plane we encounter human beings so that we first approach them physically, and then we gradually become acquainted with their inner being. Their inner being unfolds only when we penetrate into their inner life. Hence, what we experience inwardly in connection with a human being is the result of that which develops from out of our own inner life. When we ourselves have crossed the portal of death and encounter the souls that have passed through the portal of death before us, we know to begin with: there is that particular soul. We can feel it, we know that it is there. Now we must, however, surrender our whole inner being to the first impression that arises, to the first most abstract impression. Here on earth we should allow other human beings to exercise their influence upon us; but in the spiritual world we must surrender our inner being, and we must now build up the image, the imagination, ourselves. The imaginative element, what we can look upon, this we must gradually build up. You may have an idea of the soul's experiences after death if you imagine that you do not see it all, but that you take hold of it ... and as you gradually encompass it with your grasp, you form an image, you build up an image for yourself. You must therefore build up in inner activity the image of the soul whom you encounter. You realize, as it were: 'I am now facing a soul — what soul is it? It is the soul ...' (and this knowledge rises out of your own soul) 'towards whom I had the feelings of a son towards his mother.' And you begin to feel: 'I experience myself together with this soul.' Now you begin to build its spiritual form. You must be active within it, and then it develops into an image. Through the fact that you build this image together with the other soul, you are united with that dead person even before you begin to form its spiritual shape. In this manner you are united with everything with which you were united during your earthly life, that is to say, you now experience these things in their own world. You must discover them by awakening within you the power of vision, so that you may look upon them, but this requires activity on your part.

It is not the same with souls that still dwell in their physical body, with souls that are still alive when we die. Even here on earth we encounter them in the form of images. After death we look down upon them on the earth and do not need to build up their image, for they already face us as images. The

souls of those still on the earth may of course weave into these images something that can become spiritual warmth and nourishment for the dead, namely, the image which they are able to form through their thoughts for the dead, through their lasting love and memory, or — we know this, as spiritual scientists — by their reading something to the dead.

You see, all this extends the human gaze so that it penetrates, really penetrates, into the real world. If this rises up before our soul, we begin to realize how little we know of the spiritual world. This was not always the case. Only the completely materialistic people of modern times boast of the great extent of their knowledge. But we know that in the past human beings were clairvoyant and that this ancient, atavistic clairvoyance was lost only because certain qualities had to be acquired which disappeared in the midst of an existence connected with a materialistic world. If a real materialist, a thoroughly materialistic thinker, approaches us, he will, of course, say: 'It is nonsense to speak of an ancient clairvoyance, or that people had a special knowledge in the past.' But if we would only open our physical eyes a little as we pass through the world, we would very soon discover the falsity of such an argument! It is not even so long ago that people used to know more than they do at the present time.

You know, for we have often considered this matter — but let me mention it again at the conclusion of this lecture — that Lucifer and Ahriman have a share in our spiritual existence. We also know that in the Bible Lucifer is symbolized as a Serpent, as the Serpent on the Tree. The physical serpent, such as we see it today, and as modern painters always paint it when they depict the Paradise Scene, is not a real Lucifer; it is only his outer image, his physical image. The real Lucifer is a being that remained behind during the Moon-stage of evolution. He cannot be seen upon the earth among physical objects. If a painter wishes to paint Lucifer's real aspect he would have to paint him so that he can be grasped as an etheric form, through a kind of inner clairvoyant form of contemplation. He would then appear in the shape in which he works upon us; he would show that he is not connected with our head or with our organism in so far as these are exclusively formed by the earth, but that he is connected with the continuation of our head, with the spinal cord. A painter who knows something through spiritual science would therefore paint Adam and Eve, the Tree, and on the Tree the Serpent, but this serpent would only be a symbol and it would have a human head. If we were to come across such a painting today, we would assume that the painter has, of course, been able to paint this picture through spiritual science.

Probably such a painting may even be found here in Leipzig; but people do not go about with open eyes, they go through the world with bandaged eyes. In the Art Gallery of Hamburg there is a painting of the Middle Ages by Master Bertram, setting forth the Paradise Scene. In that painting, the Serpent on the Tree is painted correctly, as described just now. That picture can be seen there. But other painters have also painted the Paradise Scene in that way. What may we gather from this? That in the

Middle Ages people still knew this, they knew it to the extent of being able to paint it. In other words: it is not so long ago that human beings were pushed completely on to the physical plane.

The course of man's spiritual history as related by materialistic thinkers, is, after all, nothing but an outer deception, because they think that man always had the aspect which he assumed in the course of the past few centuries, whereas it is not so long ago that he used to look into the spiritual world with the aid of his ancient clairvoyance. He had to abandon the spiritual world because he was not free, and in order to acquire full freedom and his ego-consciousness it was necessary that he should leave the spiritual world. Now he must once more find his way into the spiritual world.

Spiritual science therefore prepares something very important and essential: namely, that we may once more penetrate livingly into the spiritual world. Again and again let us conjure up in our soul the necessity of feeling that this small number of men that is now living in the very midst of a materialistic world and is led through its karma to the possibility of grasping mankind's most important task for the future — that this small number of human beings is called upon to fulfil important, most important, tasks through its soul-life. We should realize without any pride, we should realize modestly and humbly, the great difference between a soul that is gradually finding its way into the spiritual world, and all the people outside, who have not the slightest idea of this, who are, above all, not willing to have any idea of it. This fact should not merely arouse in us discouraging and painful feelings, but produce feelings that incite us to continue our work with increasing energy and to work faithfully within the stream of spiritual science, to which we were led through our karma.

When we were together last I also mentioned that when a human being passes through the portal of death before having lived through the whole of his life, then that part which is given to him in the form of an etheric body has not been used up completely. When a human being passes through the portal of death in his youth, then his etheric body might still have worked for years upon his physical body. But these forces do not get lost; they are still there. I also mentioned that in the present time, through the fact that every day and every hour death so numerously approaches mankind, many, many etheric bodies that might still have worked for a long time upon their physical bodies here on the physical plane are handed over to the spiritual-etheric world and hover in it. The forces that might, for decades, have provided for the physical body, become spiritual forces that co-operate in the spiritual development of humanity. Thus a time will come when these forces that constitute these etheric bodies, can be used for the spiritual progress of humanity; but this time will only come if here on earth there will be human souls who are able to understand this.

When the terrible events of the present shall have passed over the earth and there will be peace once more, then the souls of those who are still living on the earth in human bodies will have the possibility of grasping something of the fact that all those who have gone into the spiritual world before their

time have their etheric bodies in that world and that they can ray their forces into the earth. It will be necessary that this fact be grasped by these souls. These souls can then co-operate in that spiritual progress which is rendered possible particularly through the many deaths of self-sacrifice.

Imagine what it would mean if spiritual science were to disappear, and if no one were to have any comprehension for all that is being prepared in the spiritual world through these deaths of self-sacrifice! Imagine what this would mean! In that case, all those forces would become the property of Beings who would use them for other purposes than those for which they should be used, in accordance with the plan and resolution of the Gods who follow the right course of development.

This is an admonition that also comes from the events of our time, an admonition to the effect that we should stand fully within all that which constitutes the spiritual world. For even these events of our time have their spiritual aspect. What they reveal outwardly, in the form of blood, death and sacrifices, is the external expression of an inner spiritual course of events, which should, however, be grasped in the right spirit.

Of this I wish to remind you again and again, with the words that conclude our present considerations:

From the courage of the fighters,
From the blood of battles,
From the sufferings of the abandoned,
From the nation's deeds of sacrifice,
Shall grow out a spiritual fruit,
If souls lead, in spirit-consciousness,
Their hearts and minds into the spirit-realm.

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