

Rudolf Steiner

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LIFE BETWEEN DEATH AND REBIRTH

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IT HAS often been explained that it is not as easy to investigate and describe the realm of the occult as is commonly thought. If one wishes to proceed conscientiously in this domain, one will feel it necessary to make repeatedly fresh investigations into important chapters of spiritual research. In recent months it has been my task, among many other things, to make new investigations into a subject of which we have often spoken here. New aspects emerge as a result of such investigations.

Today we shall deal again with the life between death and rebirth, although it can only be done in outline. This does not mean that what has previously been said has to be changed in any way. Precisely in connection with this chapter this is not the case, but in the study of supersensible facts we should always consider them from as many points of view as possible. So today we will consider from a universal standpoint much of what has been presented in my books *Theosophy* or *Occult Science* more from the aspect of immediate human experience. The facts are the same, but we should not imagine that we are fully conversant with them when they have been described from one point of view only. Occult facts are such that we must move

around them, so to speak, and examine them from every point of view. In regard to spiritual science the mistake is all too common that judgments are passed by people who may have heard a few statements about a subject without having had the patience to allow what can be said from other aspects to work upon them. Yet the truths of spiritual research can be understood by sound common sense, as was pointed out in yesterday's public lecture.

Today we shall not pay so much attention to the stage after death where the life in kamaloca begins, but rather consider the point at the end of kamaloca when life in the spiritual proper begins. This period lasts until the soul descends into a new incarnation and re-enters earthly life.

Something can be communicated about these matters because, as you know, clairvoyant vision brings one into the same realm in which a human being dwells between death and rebirth. In initiation one experiences, although in a different way, what takes place between death and rebirth. This accounts for the fact that one can communicate something about this realm.

To begin with, I wish to mention two fundamental points of clairvoyant perception that also will help in our understanding of life after death. Attention has often been drawn to the great difference between life in the supersensible world and life in the physical, material world. For instance, the process of knowledge is totally different in the supersensible world from what it is on earth. In the physical world objects present themselves to our senses by making impressions of color and light upon our eyes, audible impressions upon our ears and other impressions upon other sense organs. To perceive objects we must move about in the world. To perceive an object at a distance, we must go

towards it. Briefly, in the sense world we must move about to perceive things. The opposite holds true for supersensible perceptions. The quieter the soul, the more everything in the way of inner movement is excluded, the less we strive to draw a thing towards us, the longer we are capable of waiting, the more surely will the perception come and the truer will be the experience we gain from it. In the supersensible world we must allow things to approach us. That is an essential point. We must develop inner silence. Then things will come to us.

The second point I wish to make is this. The way in which the supersensible world confronts us depends on what we bring with us from the ordinary sense world. This is important. It may give rise to considerable soul difficulties in the supersensible world. For instance, it may be exceedingly painful to realize in the supersensible world that we loved a person less than we ought to have done, less than he deserved to be loved by us. This fact stands before the spiritual gaze of one who has entered the supersensible world with far greater intensity than could ever be the case in the physical world. In addition, something else may cause great pain to one with clairvoyant consciousness. None of the forces that we are able to draw from the supersensible world can in any way change or improve a relationship of soul in the physical that we recognize as not having been right. It cannot be made good by forces drawn from the spiritual world. This experience is infinitely more painful than anything we may experience in the physical world. It gives rise to a feeling of powerlessness towards the necessity of karma that can be lived out only in the physical world.

These two factors confront the pupil of occult science

after only a little progress. They appear immediately in the life between death and rebirth. Suppose that shortly after death we meet a person who died before us. We encounter him, and we feel the total relationship that we had with him here on earth. We are together with the one who died before, at the same time or after us, and we feel that that is how we stood with him in life. That was our relationship to him. But whereas in the physical world when we realize that we have done an injustice to someone in feeling or in deed, we are able to make the necessary adjustment, we are not able to do so, directly, in the life after death. Clear insight into the nature of the relationship is there, but in spite of the full awareness that it ought to be different, we are incapable of changing anything. To begin with, things must remain as they are. The depression caused by many a reproach is due to the fact that one is clearly aware of the way in which a relationship was not right but it must be left as it is. Yet one feels all the time that it ought to be different. This mood of soul should be transposed to the whole of life after death. After death we realize all the more strongly what we did wrongly during our life on earth but we are incapable of changing anything. Things must take their course, regardless. We look back on what we have done and we must experience wholly the consequences of our actions, knowing full well that nothing can be altered.

It is not only with relationships to other human beings, but with the whole of our soul configuration after death, which depends on a number of factors. To begin with, let me portray life after death in the form of Imaginations. If we take the words "Visions" or "Imaginations" in the sense in which I explained them yesterday, no misunder-

standing will arise. Man perceives the physical world through his sense organs. After death he lives in a world of visions, but these visions are mirror-images of reality. Just as here in the physical world we do not immediately perceive the inner nature of the rose, but the external redness, so do we not have a direct perception of a departed friend or brother, but encounter a visionary image. We are enveloped in the cloud of our visions, so to speak, but we know quite clearly that we are together with the other being. It is a real relationship, in fact more real than a relationship between one person and another can be on earth.

In the first period after death we perceive a soul through the image. Also after the kamaloca period the visions that surround us, and that we experience, point back, for the most part, to what we experienced on earth. We know, for instance, that a dead friend is there outside us in the spiritual world. We perceive him through our visions. We feel entirely at one with him. We know exactly how we are related to him. What we chiefly perceive, however, is what happened between us on earth. This, to begin with, clothes itself in our vision. The chief thing is the aftermath of our earthly relationship, just as even after the kamaloca period we live in the consequences of our earthly existence. The cloud of visions that envelops us is entirely dependent on how we spent our earthly existence.

In the first period of kamaloca the soul is clothed, as in a cloud, by its Imaginations. At first the cloud is dark. When some time has elapsed after death, Imaginative vision gradually perceives that this cloud begins to light up as if irradiated by the rays of the morning sun. When Inspiration is added to Imaginative cognition we realize that we live, to begin with, in the cloud of our earthly experi-

ences. We are enveloped by them. We are able to relate ourselves only to those who have died and with whom we were together on the earth, or to those still on earth capable of ascending with their consciousness into the spiritual world. What we have characterized for Imaginative cognition as the illumination of the cloud of our visions from one side by a glimmering light points to the approach of the hierarchies into our own being. We now begin to live into the realm of higher spirituality. Previously, we were only connected to the world we brought with us. Now the life of the higher hierarchies begin to shine towards us, to penetrate us. But in order to understand this process, we must gain some insight into the relationships of size perceived through imaginative cognition as the soul draws out of the physical body.

This actually happens as we pass through the gate of death. Our being expands and becomes larger and larger. This is not an easy concept but that is what actually happens. It is only on earth that we consider ourselves limited within the boundary of our skin. After death we expand into the infinite spaces, growing ever larger. When we have reached the end of the kamaloca period, we literally extend to the orbit of the moon around the earth. In the language of occultism we become Moon dwellers. Our being has expanded to such an extent that its outer boundary coincides with the circle described by the moon around the earth. Today I cannot go into the relative positions of the planets. An explanation of what does not apparently agree with orthodox astronomy can be found in the Düsseldorf lectures, *Spiritual Hierarchies and Their Reflection in the Physical World: Zodiac, Planets, Cosmos*.

Thus we grow farther out into cosmic space, into the

whole planetary system, though first into what the occultist calls the Mercury sphere. That is to say, after the kamaloca period we become Mercury dwellers. We truly feel that we are inhabiting cosmic space. Just as during our physical existence we feel ourselves to be earth dwellers, so then we feel ourselves to be Mercury dwellers. I cannot describe the details now, but the following conscious experience is present. We are not now enclosed in such a small fraction of space as during our earthly existence but the wide sphere bounded by the orbit of Mercury is within our being. How we live through this period also depends upon how we have prepared ourselves on earth—on the forces we have imbibed on earth in order to grow into the right or wrong relationship to the Mercury sphere.

In order to understand these facts we can compare two or more people by means of occult research but we will take two. For instance, let us consider a man who passed through the gate of death with an immoral attitude and one who passed through the gate of death with a moral attitude of soul. A considerable difference is perceptible and it becomes apparent when we consider the relationship of one person to another after death. For the man with a moral attitude of soul, the pictures are present, enveloping the soul and he can have a certain degree of communion everywhere with other human beings. This is due to his moral attitude. A man with an immoral attitude of soul becomes a kind of hermit in the spiritual world. For example, he knows that another human being is also in the spiritual world. He knows that he is together with him but he is unable to emerge from the prison of his cloud of Imaginations and approach him. Morality makes us into social beings in the spiritual world, into beings who can have contact with

others. Lack of morality makes us into hermits in the spiritual world and transports us into solitude. This is an important causal connection between what lives in our souls here on earth and what occurs between death and rebirth.

This is true also of the further course of events. At a later period, after having passed through the Mercury sphere, which in the occult we call the Venus sphere, we feel ourselves as Venus dwellers. There between Mercury and Venus, where our cloud of visions is irradiated from without, the Beings of the higher hierarchies are able to approach the human being. Now again it depends on whether we have prepared ourselves in the right manner to be received as social spirits into the ranks of the hierarchies and to have communion with them, or whether we are compelled to pass them by as hermits. Whether we are social or lonely spirits depends upon still another factor. Whereas in the previous sphere we can be sociable only if this has been prepared on earth as a result of morality, in the Venus sphere the power that leads us into community, into a kind of social life, is due to our religious attitude on earth. We most certainly condemn ourselves to become hermits in the Venus sphere if we have failed to develop religious feelings during earthly life, feelings of union with the Infinite, with the Divine. Occult investigation observes that as a result of an atheistic tendency in the soul, of rejecting the connection of our finite with our infinite nature, the human being locks himself up within his own prison. It is a fact that the adherents of the Monistic Union, with its creed that does not promote a truly religious attitude, are preparing themselves for a condition in which they will no longer be able to form any Monistic Union, but will be relegated each to his own separate prison!

This is not meant to be a principle on which to base judgments. It is a fact that presents itself to occult observation as the consequence of a religious or irreligious attitude of soul during earthly life. Many different religions have been established on the earth in the course of evolution, all of them emanating essentially from a common source. Their founders have had to reckon with the temperament of the different peoples, with the climate and with other factors to which the religions had to be adjusted. It is therefore in the nature of things that souls did not come into this Venus sphere with a common religious consciousness, but with one born of their particular creed.

Definite feelings for the spiritual that are colored by this or that religious creed bring it about that in the Venus sphere a man has community only with those of like feelings who shared the same creed during earthly life. In the Venus sphere individuals are separated according to their particular creeds. On the earth they have hitherto been divided into races according to external characteristics. Although the configuration of groups in the Venus sphere corresponds in general to the groupings of people here on earth because racial connections are related to religious creeds, the groupings do not quite correspond because there they are brought together according to their understanding of a particular creed. As a result of experience connected with a particular creed, souls enclose themselves within certain boundaries. In the Mercury sphere a man has, above all, understanding for those with whom he was connected on earth. If he had a moral attitude of soul, he will have real intercourse in the Mercury sphere with those to whom he was related during his earthly life. In the Venus sphere he is taken up into one of the great religious communities

to which he belonged during his earthly existence by virtue of his constitution of soul.

The next sphere is the Sun sphere in which we feel ourselves as Sun dwellers for a definite period between death and rebirth. During this period we learn to know the nature of the Sun, which is quite other than astronomy describes. Here again it is a question of living rightly into the Sun sphere. We now have the outstanding experience, and it arises in the soul like an elemental power, that all differentiations between human souls must cease. In the Mercury sphere we are more or less limited to the circle of those with whom we were related on earth. In the Venus sphere we feel at home with those who had similar religious experiences to ours on earth and we still find satisfaction only among these communities. But the soul is conscious of deep loneliness in the Sun sphere if it has no understanding for the souls entering this sphere, as is the case with Felix Balde, for instance. Now in ancient times conditions were such that in the Venus sphere souls were to be found in the provinces of the several religions, finding and giving understanding in them. Because all religions have sprung from a common source, when the human being entered the Sun sphere he had in him so much of the old common inheritance that he could come near to all the other souls in the Sun sphere and be together with them, to understand them, to be a social spirit among them.

In these more ancient periods of evolution souls could not do much of themselves to satisfy the longing that arose there. Because without human intervention a common human nucleus was present in mankind, it was possible for souls to have intercourse with others belonging to different creeds. In ancient Brahmanism, in the Chinese and other

religions of the earth, there was so much of the common kernel of religion that souls in the Sun sphere found themselves in that primal home, the source of all religious life. This changed in the middle period of the earth. Connection with the primal source of the religions was lost and can only be found again through occult knowledge. So, in the present cycle of evolution man also must prepare himself for entering the Sun sphere while still on earth because community does not arise there of itself. This is also an aspect of the significance of the Mystery of Golgotha, of Christianity. Because of it human beings in the present cycle of evolution can so prepare themselves on earth that universal community is achieved in the Sun sphere. For this purpose the Sun Spirit, the Christ, had to come down to earth. Since His coming, it has been possible for souls on the earth to find the way to universal community in the Sun sphere between death and rebirth.

Much could be added in support of the universality that is born of the Christ Mystery when it is rightly understood. Much has been said in the course of years, but the Christ Mystery can ever and again be illuminated from new aspects. It is often said that special emphasis of the Christ Mystery creates prejudices against other creeds, and that is advanced because in our Anthroposophical Movement in Central Europe special emphasis has been laid on it. Such a reproach is quite unintelligible. The true meaning of the Christ Mystery has only been discovered from the occult aspect in modern times. If a Buddhist were to say, "You place Christianity above Buddhism because you attribute a special position to the Christ that is not indicated in my sacred books, and you are therefore prejudiced against Buddhism," that would be as sensible as if the Buddhist were



to claim that the Copernican view of the universe cannot be accepted because it, too, is not contained in his sacred writings. The fact that things are discovered at a later date has nothing to do with the equal justification of religious beliefs.

The Mystery of Golgotha is such that it cannot be regarded as a special privilege. It is a spiritual-scientific fact that can be acknowledged by every religious system just as the Copernican system can. It is not a question of justifying some creed that up until now has failed to understand the Mystery of Golgotha, but rather is it a question of grasping the spiritual-scientific fact of Golgotha. If this is unintelligible, it is even more so to speak about an abstract comparison of all creeds and to say that one ought to accept an abstract similarity among them. The different creeds should not be compared with what Christianity has become as a creed, but with the essence that is contained in Christianity itself.

Take the Hindu creed. Nobody is received into this creed who is not a Hindu. It is connected with a people, and this is true of most ancient creeds. Buddhism has broken through this restriction, yet if rightly understood, it too applies to a particular community. But now let us consider the external facts. If in Europe we were to have a creed similar, let us say, to the Hindu creed, we should be obliged to swear allegiance to the ancient god, Wotan. Wotan was a national god, a god connected with a definite racial stock. But what has in fact happened in the West? It is not a national god that has been accepted, but, inasmuch as his external life is concerned, an alien personality. Jesus of Nazareth has been accepted from outside. Whereas the

other creeds essentially have something egoistical about them in the religious sense and do not wish to break through their boundaries, the West has been singled out by the fact that it has suppressed its egoistical religious system—for example, the ancient Wotan religion—and for the sake of its inner substance has accepted an impulse that did not grow out of its own flesh and blood. Insofar as the West is concerned, Christianity is not the egoistical creed that the others were for the different peoples. This is a factor of considerable importance that is also borne out by external happenings. It makes for the universality of Christianity in yet another respect if Christianity truly places the Mystery of Golgotha at the center of the evolution of humanity.

Christianity has not yet made great progress in its development because even now two aspects have still not been clearly distinguished. They will only be distinguished slowly and by degrees. Who, in the true sense of the Mystery of Golgotha, is a Christian? He is one who knows that something real happened in the Mystery of Golgotha, that the Sun Spirit lived in the Christ, that Christ poured His Being over the earth, that Christ died for all men. Although Paul declared that Christ died not only for the Jews but also for the heathen, these words even today are still little understood. Not until it is realized that Christ fulfilled the Deed of Golgotha for all human beings will Christianity be understood. For the real power that flowed from Golgotha is one thing, and the understanding of it is another. Knowledge of who the Christ really is should be striven for, but since the Mystery of Golgotha our attitude to every man can only be expressed as follows. Whatever

your creed may be, Christ also died for you, and His significance for you is the same as for every other human being.

A true understanding of the Mystery of Golgotha leads to the attitude that we ask ourselves about each person we meet, "How much has he in him of real Christianity, irrespective of his particular belief?" Because man must increasingly acquire consciousness of what is real in him, to know something of the Mystery of Christ is naturally a lofty ideal. This will become more widespread as time goes on, and to it will belong the need to understand the Mystery of Golgotha. But this is different from the concept that one may have of the Mystery of Golgotha, of its universality that holds good for all human beings. Here the essential thing is for the soul to feel that this makes us into social beings in the Sun sphere. If we feel enclosed in some creed, we become hermits there. We are social beings in the Sun sphere if we understand the universality of the Mystery of Golgotha. Then we can find a relation to every being who draws near to us in the Sun sphere. As a result of the insight into the Mystery of Golgotha that we acquire during earthly life within our cycle of evolution, we become beings able to move freely in the Sun sphere.

Of what should we be capable during this period between death and rebirth?

We come now to a fact that is exceedingly important for modern occultism. Those human beings who lived on earth before the Mystery of Golgotha—what I am now saying is essentially correct, though not in detail—found the Throne of Christ in the Sun sphere with the Christ upon it. They were able to recognize Him because the old legacy of the common source of all religions was still living in

them. But the Christ Spirit came down from the Sun, and in the Mystery of Golgotha He flowed into the life of the earth. He left the Sun, and only the Akashic picture of the Christ is found in the Sun sphere between death and rebirth. The Throne is not occupied by the real Christ. We must bring up from the earth the concept of our living connection with Christ in order that through the Akashic picture we have a living relationship with Him. Then it is possible for us to have the Christ also from the Sun sphere and for Him to stimulate all the forces in us that are necessary if we are to pass through the Sun sphere in the right way.

Our journey between death and rebirth progresses still further. From the earthly realm we have derived the power, through a moral and religious attitude of soul, to live, as it were, into the human beings with whom we were together on the earth, and then into the higher hierarchies. But this power gradually vanishes, becomes dimmer and dimmer, and what remains is essentially the power that we derive on the earth from the Mystery of Golgotha. In order that we may find our way in the Sun sphere a new Light-bearer appears there, a Being whom we must learn to know in his primal power. We bring with us from the earth an understanding of the Christ, but in order to develop a stage further so that we may proceed out into the universe from the Sun sphere to Mars, we need to recognize the second Throne that stands beside the Throne of Christ in the Sun. This is possible simply by virtue of the fact that we are human souls. From this other Throne we now learn to know the other Being who, together with the Christ, leads us onward. This other Being is Lucifer. We learn to know Lucifer, and through the powers that he is able to impart to us



we make the further journey through the spheres of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.

We expand ever further into cosmic space, but as we move out beyond the Saturn sphere our state of consciousness is changed. We enter into a kind of cosmic twilight. We cannot call it a cosmic sleep, but a cosmic twilight. Now for the first time the powers of the whole cosmos can work in upon us. They work from all sides, and we receive them into our being. So after we have expanded into these spheres, there is a period between death and rebirth when the forces of the whole cosmos stream into our being from all sides, from the whole of the starry realms, as it were. Then we begin to draw together again, pass through the different spheres down to the Venus sphere, contract and become ever smaller until the time comes when we can again unite with an earthly human germ.

What kind of a being are we when we unite with this germ? We are the being we have described, but we have received into us the forces from the whole cosmos. What we receive during the outward journey depends on the extent to which we have prepared ourselves for it, and our karma is formed according to the way we have lived together with the human beings we have met during life on earth. The forces by means of which an adjustment takes place in a new earth life are built up as a result of having been together with those human beings after death. That we appear as a human being, that we are inwardly able to have karma imbued with cosmic forces, depends on the fact that we received forces from the whole cosmos during a certain period between death and a new birth. At birth a being who has contracted to the minutest dimensions, but has drawn into itself the forces of the wide expanse of the

whole cosmos unites itself with the physical human germ. We bear the whole cosmos within us when we incarnate again on earth. It may be said that we bear this cosmos within us in the way in which it can unite with the attitude that we, in accordance with our earlier earth existence, had brought with us in our souls on the outward journey when we were expanding into the spheres.

A twofold adaptation has to take place. We adapt to the whole cosmos and to our former karma. The fact that there is also an adaptation to former karma that must be harmonized in the cosmos came to me in an extraordinary way during the investigations of the last few months in connection with individual cases. I say, expressly, in individual cases because I do not wish to state thereby a general law. When a person passes through the gate of death he dies under a certain constellation of stars. This constellation is significant for his further life of soul because it remains there as an imprint. In his soul there remains the endeavor to enter into this same constellation at a new birth, to do justice once again to the forces received at the moment of death. It is an interesting point that if one works out the constellation at death and compares it with the constellation of the later birth, one finds that it coincides to a high degree with the constellation at the former death. It must be remembered that the person is born at another spot on the earth that corresponds with this constellation. In fact, he is adapted to the cosmos, members himself into the cosmos, and thus a balance is established in the soul between the individual and the cosmic life.

Kant once said very beautifully that there were two things that especially uplifted him—the starry heavens above him and the moral law within him. This is a beau-

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clear

tiful expression in that it is confirmed by occultism. Both are the same—the starry heavens above us and what we bear as moral law within us. For as we grow out into cosmic space between death and a new birth, we take the starry heavens into ourselves, and then in the soul we bear as our moral attitude a mirror image of the starry heavens. Here we touch upon one of the points where anthroposophy can only develop into a feeling for the moral-universal. What appears to be theory is immediately transformed into moral impulses of the soul. Here the human being feels full responsibility towards his own being, for he realizes that between death and a new birth the whole cosmos worked into his being, and he gathered together what he derived from the cosmos. He is responsible to the whole cosmos, for he actually bears the whole of the cosmos within him.

An attempt has been made to express this feeling in a passage of *The Soul's Probation*, in the monologue of Capesius, where it is said, "In your thinking world-thoughts are weaving . . ." Attention is drawn to the significance for the soul when it feels that it is man's sacred duty to bring forth the forces that one has gathered out of the cosmos, and it is the greatest sin to allow these forces to lie fallow.

Concrete investigations showed that we take the whole cosmos into our being and bring it forth again in our earthly existence. Of the forces that man carries with him, only a few have their origin on the earth. We study man in connection with the forces that work in the physical, etheric and astral bodies, and in the ego. Of course, the forces that play into our physical body come to us from the earth, but we cannot draw directly out of the earth the forces we need for the etheric body. These forces can only approach

us between death and rebirth during the period we are expanding into the planetary spheres. If one takes an immoral attitude of soul into these spheres, one will not be able to attract the right forces during the time between death and a new rebirth. A man who has not developed religious impulses cannot attract the right forces in the Venus sphere, and so the forces that are needed in the etheric may be stultified. Here we see the karmic connection that exists between later and earlier lives. This indicates how the knowledge that we obtain through occultism may become impulses in our life of soul and how the awareness of what we are can lead us to rise to an ever more spiritual life.

What was prepared for by the Mystery of Golgotha is necessary in our present cycle of evolution so that man may live in the right way into the Sun sphere between death and a new birth. Spiritual science has to achieve that the human being shall be in a position to grow out even beyond the Sun sphere with the universal-human, spiritually social consciousness that is needed there. Insofar as the Sun sphere itself is concerned, the connection that is experienced with the Mystery of Golgotha suffices. But in order to carry a feeling and understanding of the human-universal beyond the Sun sphere, we must be able to grasp, in the anthroposophical sense, the relation of the several religions to one another. We must grow beyond a narrowly circumscribed creed with its particular shades of feeling and understand every soul, irrespective of its belief. Above all, one thing connected with the Christ impulse is fulfilled between death and rebirth. It is contained in the words, "Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them." The gathering of two or three is not connected by Christ with this or that belief.

The possibility of Him being among them is provided inasmuch as they are united in His Name.

What has been cultivated for years, through the performances of the Mystery Plays, and especially the last (*The Guardian of the Threshold*), should provide a spiritual-scientific understanding for what is essential in our epoch. On the one hand, we have to acquire a relationship to the Christ impulse, on the other, to the Powers that stand in opposition to Him—the impulses of Lucifer and Ahri-man. We must realize that as soon as we emerge from Maya, we have to deal with Powers who unfold forces in the cosmos. The time is drawing ever nearer in the evolution of humanity when we must learn to discern the essential being rather than the teaching. This is nowhere so apparent as in connection with the Mystery of Golgotha. The Being is essential, not the mere content of the words.

I should like the following to be put quite exactly to the test. In fact, it is easiest to deal with people who put to the test what is said out of occult sources. There is nothing similar in any of the other creeds to the depths that are revealed through the Mystery of Golgotha.

A particular prejudice still prevails today. People speak as if things should happen in the world as they do in a school, as if everything depended on the World Teacher. But the Christ is not a World Teacher but a World Doer, One Who has fulfilled the Mystery of Golgotha, and Whose Being should be recognized. That is the point. How little it is a question of the mere words, of the mere doctrinal content, we learn from the beautiful words uttered by the Christ, "Ye are Gods!" (John 10, 34). We learn this also from the fact that He indicated repeatedly that man attains the highest when he realizes the divine in his own nature.

These words of the Christ resound into the world, "Be conscious that you are like the Gods!" One can say that that is a great teaching!

The same teaching, however, resounds from other sources. In the Bible, where the beginning of Earth evolution is described, Lucifer says, "Ye shall be as Gods!" The same doctrinal content is uttered by Lucifer and by the Christ, "Ye shall be as Gods!" but the two utterances mean the opposite for man. Indeed, shattering calls sound forth in these words uttered at one time by the Tempter and at another by Him Who is the Redeemer, the Savior and the Restorer of the being of man.

Between death and rebirth everything depends upon knowledge of the *Being*. In the Sun sphere the greatest danger is to take Lucifer for the Christ because both use the same language, as it were, give the same teaching, and from them both the same words resound forth. Everything depends on the *Being*. The fact that this Being or that Being is speaking—that is the point, not the doctrinal content because it is the real forces pulsing through the world that matter. In the higher worlds, and above all in what plays into the earthly spheres, we only understand the words aright when we know from which Being they proceed. We can never recognize the rank of a Being merely by the word, but only by knowledge of the whole connection in which a Being stands. The example of the words that men are like the Gods is an absolute confirmation of this.

These are significant facts of evolution. They are voiced not on account of their content—and in this case, too, not so much on this account—but on account of the spirit they carry, so that there may arise in souls feelings that ought to be the outcome of such words. If the feelings remain

with those who have absorbed such truths, even if the actual words are forgotten, not so much is lost, after all. Let us take the most radical case. Suppose that there were someone among us who would forget everything that had just been said, but would only retain the feeling that can flow from such words. Such a person would, nevertheless, in an anthroposophical sense, receive enough of what is meant by them.

After all, we have to make use of words, and words sometimes appear theoretical. We must learn to look through the words to the essence and receive this into the soul. If anthroposophy is grasped in its essence, the world will learn to understand many things, particularly in connection with the evolution of humanity. Here I want to quote two examples that are connected outwardly, rather than inwardly, with my recent occult investigations. They astonished me because they showed how a truth which was established occultly corresponds to what has come into the world as a result of inspired men and can be rediscovered in what exists already in the world.

I have occupied myself a great deal with Homer. Lately the fact that nothing can be changed after death, that relationships remain the same, came vividly before my soul. For example, if in life one was in some way related to a person and did not love him, this cannot be changed. If, bearing this in mind, one now reads the passages in Homer where he describes the world beyond as a place where life becomes unchangeable, one begins to understand the depth of these words about the region where things are no longer subject to change. It is a wonderful experience to compare one's own knowledge with what was expressed as signifi-

cant occult truth by the "blind Homer," the seer, in his epic!

Another fact astounded me, and though I strongly resisted it because it seemed incredible, I found it impossible to do so. Many of you will know the Medici Tombs by Michelangelo in Florence, with the statues of Giuliano and Lorenzo de Medici and four allegorical figures. The artistic element in these figures is usually overlooked. They are viewed as barren allegories. Now these figures with one exception, were not quite finished, and yet they do not give the impression of being merely allegorical. In the guide books we are told that the statue of Giuliano stands on one side and that of Lorenzo on the other. Actually, they have been reversed. The statue said to represent Lorenzo is that of Giuliano, and that of Giuliano is the statue of Lorenzo. This is correct, but in almost every history of art manual, and in Baedeker, the facts are wrongly given. The descriptions would certainly not tally and apparently the statues were once reversed. They no longer stand where Michelangelo had placed them originally. But I want to speak mainly about the four allegorical figures. At the foot of one of the Medici statues we have the figures of "Night" and "Day;" at the foot of the other, "Dawn" and "Dusk."

As I said, to begin with I resisted what I am now going to say about them. Let us start with the figure of "Night." Suppose one immerses oneself in everything one sees, in every gesture (books comment rather nonsensically that this is a gesture that a sleeping person cannot possibly adopt). If, having studied every gesture, every movement of the limbs, one asks oneself how an artist would have to portray the human figure if he wished to convey the great-

est possible activity of the etheric body in sleep, then he would have to do it out of his artistic instincts exactly as Michelangelo did it in his figure. The figure of "Night" corresponds with the posture of the etheric body. I am not suggesting that Michelangelo was conscious of this. He simply did it.

Now let us look at the figure of "Day." This is no barren allegory. Picture the lower members of the human being more passive, and the ego predominantly active. We have this expressed in the figure of "Day." If we were now to express in the posture the action of the astral body working freely when the other members are reduced to inactivity, then we should find this in the so-called allegory of "Dawn." And if we sought to express the conditions where the physical body is not altogether falling to pieces, but becomes limp as a result of the withdrawal of the ego and astral body, this is wonderfully portrayed in the figure of "Dusk." In these figures we have living portrayals of the four sheaths of man. We can readily understand the once widespread legend about the figure "Night." It was said that when Michelangelo was alone with this figure it became alive, rose up and walked about. This is understandable if one knows that it has the posture of the etheric or life body, and that in such a position the etheric body can be fully active. If this is perceived, then indeed the figure appears to rise up, and one knows that it could walk about were it not carved out of marble. If the etheric body only were really active there, then nothing would prevent it from moving about.

Many secrets are contained in the works of men, and much will become intelligible for the first time when these things are studied with sharpened occult perception.

Whether, however, we understand a work of art well or not so well, is not connected with the universal-human. What matters is something quite else. If our eyes are sharpened in this way we begin to understand the soul of another human being, not through occult perception, which, after all, cannot help seeing into the spiritual world, but through a perception quickened by spiritual science. Spiritual science grasped by sound human reason develops knowledge in us of what we meet in life, and, above all, of the souls of our fellow men. We shall attempt to understand every human soul.

This understanding, however, is meant in quite a different way from the usual. Unfortunately, in life love is all too often entirely egotistical. Usually a man loves what he is particularly attracted to because of some circumstance or other. For the rest, he contents himself with universal love, a general love for humanity. But what is this? We should be able to understand every human soul. We will not find excellence everywhere, but no harm is done for actually one can do no greater injury to some souls than by pouring blind love and adulation over them.

We shall speak further on this subject in the lecture the day after tomorrow.

## XIV

### FURTHER FACTS ABOUT LIFE BETWEEN DEATH AND REBIRTH

*Breslau, April 5, 1913*

**I**N COMING together in our group meetings we can speak more precisely about things than is possible in public lectures and written works. Today I would like to present supplementary considerations to add to what is to be found in the books and cycles of lectures.

You can imagine, my dear friends, that life between death and a new birth is as rich and varied as life here between birth and death, and that whenever one describes what happens after death one can obviously only deal with certain aspects. Today I will not touch so much on what is already known, but draw attention to what can shed further light upon it.

If one is able to look into the spiritual worlds where man dwells between death and a new birth, then particularly in our time the necessity of what is intended with our spiritual scientific work is confirmed, that is, the need to give something to the hearts and souls of men by way of spiritual science.

Let us take our starting point from a particular instance. A man died. He loved his wife deeply and was much attached to his family. Spiritual observation showed that he suffered



deeply from the fact that when he looked down on the earth he was unable to find the souls of his wife and children. Now in the manner by which the seer can enter into communication with a person after death, the man informed the seer that with his thoughts and with all his feelings he was able to relive the time when he was united with his beloved on the earth. But he added, "When I lived on earth my wife was like sunshine to me. Now I must forego this. I am able to direct my thoughts back to what I have experienced but I cannot find my wife."

Why is this? For this is not the case with all who pass through the gate of death. If we were to go back several thousands of years, we would find that the souls of men were able to look down from the spiritual world and participate in the affairs of those who remained behind on the earth. Why was this the case for all souls in ancient times before the Mystery of Golgotha? In ancient times, as you know, men so lived on the earth that they still possessed an original clairvoyance. They not only saw the sense world by means of the eyes. They also gazed into the spiritual origins, into the archetypal beings behind the sense world. The capacity to live with the spiritual world during physical existence brought with it the ability of the soul to perceive what it had left behind on the earth after death. Today souls no longer have the faculty of living directly with the spiritual world because the evolution of humanity has consisted in man's descent into physical existence out of the spiritual world. This has resulted in the faculty of judgment and so forth, but it has robbed man of the faculty to live with the spiritual world.

During a period immediately following the Mystery of

Golgotha when souls were deeply moved by the Christ impulse, at last a part of mankind was able to regain this faculty to some extent. Now, however, we again live in an age when souls who go through the gate of death and have not concerned themselves with the realities of the spirit lose the connection. Mankind needs a spiritual revelation and we can have a justified conviction that it should permeate human souls. Today the old religious confession does not suffice. Souls who seek to gaze down spiritually from the other world to ours need what they can receive by means of a spiritual scientific understanding of the Mystery of Golgotha. It is therefore our endeavor that spirit light may develop in their souls.

The man of whom we have spoken had not concerned himself in any way with thoughts or feelings about the spiritual world. He went through the gate of death but no thoughts of the spiritual world had occupied his mind. He therefore was able to say, "I know by means of my memory that my wife is down there. I know she is there, but I cannot see her, cannot find her."

Under what conditions would he have been able to find her? At the present time only such souls can be perceived in whom spiritual faculties dwell. Such souls can be seen from the other world, souls in whom thoughts live with understanding for the spirit. As the dead one gazes down, a person who has remained behind on the earth only becomes visible for him when spiritual thoughts live within the soul of that person. The dead person sees these thoughts. Otherwise the person remains invisible and the dead one suffers from the anguish of knowing that the person is there but he is unable to find him. As soon as one succeeds in con-

veying to such a soul thoughts concerning the spiritual world, however, the soul of the one who remains behind on earth begins to light up, to exist for the dead.

Do not object by saying that it is an injustice that people who have no spiritual thoughts here on earth, and perhaps it is not even their fault, should remain invisible to the dead. If the world were arranged otherwise, man would never seek to strive for perfection. Man has to learn by what he foregoes. Such a soul, as a result of the pain and loneliness it suffers during life between death and rebirth, is given the impulse to receive spiritual thoughts. From this aspect we see that spiritual science is like a language by means of which the living and the dead may understand one another, and can be present for and perceptible to each other.

Spiritual science has yet another mission in connection with bridging the abyss between the living and the dead. When human souls go through the gate of death they enter a realm where the connection with life on earth is maintained by the recollection of what has happened there. I am not repeating what can be found in my written works. What I am now saying is intended as a supplement. For a long period after death man re-experiences what has happened on earth and has to rid himself of the longing for his physical body. During this time he learns to live as a soul-spirit being. Let us vividly imagine how this appears to supersensible perception. To begin with, the soul has a connection with itself. One sees one's own inner life that has run its course in thoughts, in mental representations, etc. One recalls the relationships one has had with his fellow men.

If one seeks to look down upon it, the earth offers a special aspect. One has the urge to look down. The urge to remem-

ber the earth accompanies one throughout the whole of life between death and a new birth. As long as man is called to journey from life to life the consciousness remains that he is destined for the earth, that he must return again and again to the earth if he would develop himself rightly. We can see this with the dead because if he were to lose completely the thoughts that link him to the earth, he would also lose the thought of his own ego. Then he would no longer be aware that he is, and this would result in the most dreadful feeling of anguish. Man must not lose his connection with the earth. The earth must not escape his mental representation, so to speak. In general, too, the earth cannot completely disappear from him. It is only in our period of the materialistic deluge, during which the spiritual revelation has to come so that the link between the living and the dead may be maintained, that souls having no connection with people who have spiritual thoughts and feelings on earth find it difficult to look back.

It is important for the dead that those with whom they were connected on earth carry every evening thoughts of the spiritual world with them into sleep. The more thoughts about the spiritual world we carry with us into sleep, the greater the service we perform for those we have known on earth who have died before us. It is difficult to speak of these connections because our words are taken from the physical plane. In the spiritual world what we bring with us as spiritual thoughts in sleep is the substance by means of which, in a certain sense, the dead can live. One who dies and has no one on earth who carries spiritual thoughts with him in sleep is famished and may be compared to one banished to a barren island on earth. The dead person who cannot find a soul in whom spiritual feelings dwell experiences

himself as if in a desert void of everything that is needed to sustain life. In view of this, one cannot stress too much the earnestness with which thoughts of spiritual science should be taken in a period like our own, when world-conceptions that are alien to the spirit gain the upper hand more and more.

It was different in past times when an evening prayer was said before going to sleep and its after-effects accompanied one. Today it is more likely than not that a person falls asleep after a meal or some other form of enjoyment without a thought devoted to the supersensible. In this way we rob the dead of their spiritual nourishment. Such insight should lead to the practice, proven to be effective by many of our friends, that I would like to term, *the reading to the dead*. To read to the dead is of untold significance.

Let us assume that two people lived side by side here on earth. The one finds his way to spiritual science out of a deep, heartfelt impulse, the other is increasingly repelled by it. In such a case little is achieved in attempting to bring the person to a spiritual concept of the world during life. In fact, one's endeavors in this direction may indeed cause the other to hate it all the more. Now when such a person dies we have the possibility of helping him all the more.

What lives in our soul is exceedingly complex and the area bounded by our consciousness is only a small part of the total content of our soul life. Man does not know much of what lives in his soul and often something is present that he takes for the opposite of what is actually there. Thus it can happen that a person comes to hate spiritual science. He becomes aware of this with his consciousness. In the depths of his soul, however, this can reveal itself as an all the more profound longing for spiritual science. When we

have gone through the gate of death we experience the depths of our soul existence that come to the surface. When we meet the dead we have known on earth, they often show themselves to be different from what they were on earth. A person who has hated spiritual science with his normal consciousness but longed for it in the depths of his soul without being aware of it will often display this longing powerfully after death. We can help him by taking a book with a spiritual-scientific content, forming a vivid inner picture of the one who has died, and reading to him as we would to a living person, not with a loud voice, but softly. The dead can understand this. Naturally, those who have made a contact with spiritual science during their lifetime understand it all the more readily. We should not fail to read to the dead or converse with them in thought. I would like to draw attention to a practical matter, namely, that for a number of years after death, for a period of some three to five years, a person can understand the language he has spoken on earth. This gradually wanes, but he preserves an understanding of spiritual thoughts. Then we can also read to the dead in a language that he did not understand on earth but that we have ourselves mastered. In this way we can perform the greatest service to the dead.

It is particularly in such realms that one realized the full significance of spiritual science because it bridges the gulf between the living and the dead. We can imagine that if we succeed in spreading spiritual science on earth in ever wider circles, more and more souls will become conscious of a communion with the dead.

Thus for a period after death man is still directly connected with the earth. Then he has to grow into and become a citizen of the spiritual world. This requires preparation.

He first must possess a sensitivity and understanding for the spiritual world. Spiritual investigation observes a considerable difference after death between souls who have cultivated moral feelings and inclinations on earth and those who have failed to do so. A person who has not developed moral feelings on earth becomes a hermit after death. He will be unable to find his way both to other human beings and to the higher hierarchies. Consciousness is not extinguished then, and what awaits man is a sense of utter loneliness. From a certain period called the Mercury period onward man gains the possibility of living together with other beings by virtue of his moral life. We may say therefore that the way a person lives on earth determines his existence in the Mercury sphere, determines whether he experiences a dreadful hermit-like existence or establishes contact with other human souls or the beings of the higher hierarchies.

This is followed by another period during which man must be differently prepared if he does not again condemn himself to loneliness. Loneliness comes to pass if he has not developed any religious feelings here on earth. This period is called the Venus period. There a person who has failed to develop religious feelings experiences himself as blind and dead in relation to everything that surrounds him.

In a subsequent period, so as not to remain insensitive toward the beings of the higher world, a preparation in the complete appreciation of all religions is necessary. That is the Sun period. We prepare for it here on earth by an understanding for all that is human, and for the different religious denominations. In former times in the Sun period it sufficed for one man to belong to the Brahma religion, for another to that of Lao-Tse, and so forth. Today, how-

ever, because times have changed men stand opposite one another through their religious creeds and therefore the Sun period cannot be rightly experienced. For this a spiritual sensitivity is needed.

In the Sun period, which man has to traverse between death and a new birth, it is as if one entered into a world where one found a particular place empty or filled, depending on one's preparation. We do not find the place empty if we understand the Mystery of Golgotha. The Christ impulse affords the possibility of understanding every human experience. Christianity is a general religion, valid for all people. Christianity is not limited to a particular folk, race or nationality, as is the case with Hinduism and other national religions. Had the people of middle Europe preserved their old folk religion, we would still today find a Wotan cult, a Thor cult, and so on. But the European people have accepted the Christian creed. One is not a Christian in the true sense because one adheres to one or the other Christian dogma, however, but because one knows that Christ died for the whole of humanity. Only gradually will people learn to live truly as Christians.

In our time most Europeans in India pay mere lip service to their own belief. The attitude that one should develop is that wherever we meet a human being in the face of the earth the Christ impulse can be found. The Hindu will not believe that his god dwells in every man. The Christian knows that Christ lives in every human being. Spiritual science will reveal that the true core of all religions is contained in a rightly understood Christianity, and that every religion, inasmuch as it becomes conscious of its essential kernel, leads to the Mystery of Golgotha.

In considering other initiates or religious founders it is

evident that they seek to reveal certain things out of the higher worlds because they have gone through a process of initiation. We do not understand the Christ correctly if we do not clearly see that the Christ has not gone through one or the other form of initiation on earth. He was initiated by virtue of the fact that He was there and united everything within Himself.

When the seer looks at the life of the Buddha and then follows it through in the spiritual world, he realizes more clearly the true nature of the Buddha. This is not so with the life of Christ. The Christ life is such that one must first establish a connection with it on earth in order to understand it in the spiritual world. If one does not gain such a connection and one is nevertheless initiated, one can behold many things, but one cannot see the Christ if one has not first gained a connection with Him on earth.

That is why so few people understand the Mystery of Golgotha. The Christ is a Being who is of equal importance for the most primitive human being and for the highest initiate. The most primitive soul can find a relationship to Christ, and the initiate must also find it. One learns to know many things when one enters into the spiritual world. There is only one thing that does not exist there, one thing that cannot be learned there and that is death. Death exists only in the physical world. In the spiritual world there is transformation but not death. Therefore, all the spiritual beings who never descend to the earth and only dwell in spiritual realms do not go through death.

Christ has become the companion of man on earth and the event of Golgotha, if one understands it as the unique death of a god, is what prevents us from confronting emptiness in the Sun period. The other initiates are human

beings who through a number of incarnations have developed themselves in a special way. Christ had never been on the earth before His advent but dwelt in realms where there is no death. He is the only one among the gods who has learned to know death. Therefore, in order to become acquainted with the Christ one has to understand His death, and because this is essential the Mystery of Golgotha can be understood only on earth where death exists. We do not experience the Christ in higher worlds if we have not gained a relationship to Him on earth. We find His place empty during the Sun period. If, however, we are able to take the Christ impulse with us, then the throne in the Sun is not empty. Then we find the Christ consciously.

During our present phase of human evolution it is important that we should find the Christ in the spiritual world at this stage and recognize Him. Why? In the Sun period we have gradually entered a realm in which we are dependent on spiritual light. Previously, before the Sun period, we still experienced the after-effects of the earth, the after-effects of what we have been personally, including our moral and religious feelings. Now we require more than these. Now we require the faculty to see what is in the spiritual world, but this cannot be prepared for on earth. We have to journey through realms of forces of which we cannot know anything here on earth.

As he enters into life through birth, man has not as yet got a developed brain. He first must form it in accordance with the achievements of previous earth lives. For if one needs a particular faculty it is not sufficient that one has acquired it. One also has to know how the requisite physical organ has to be formed.

There exists an important but dangerous leader. Here on

earth he remains unconscious, but from the Sun period onward he is necessary. The leader is Lucifer. We would wander in darkness if Lucifer were not to approach us. However, we can only walk beside him if we are guided by the Christ. Together they lead man after the Sun period in subsequent forms of life, that is, through the Mars, Jupiter and Saturn periods. During the times following the Sun period, man is brought together with forces that he requires for his next incarnation. It is sheer nonsense to believe as materialistic science does that the physical body is inherited. Today science cannot see its error but spiritual truths will be acknowledged in the future and the fallacy, too, will be recognized. For nothing can be inherited apart from the basic structure of the brain and the spinal cord, that is, everything that is contained within and bounded by the hard skull cap and the vertebrae of the spinal column. Everything else is conditioned by forces from the macrocosmos. If man were only given what he inherits he would be a totally inhuman lump, so to speak. The inherited part has to be worked through by what man brings with him out of the spiritual world.

Why do I use the terms Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn for the periods after death? When man has gone through the gate of death he expands more and more. In fact, life after death is such that one knows oneself to be spread out over a vast space. This expansion goes so far that one finally occupies the space bounded by the orbit of the moon. Then one grows out to the orbit of Mercury in the occult sense, then out to the orbits of Venus, Sun and Mars. One grows out into the vast celestial spaces. But the spatial togetherness of the many human souls is not significant. When you permeate the whole of the Venus sphere this is

also the case for the others, but it does not mean that because of this you are aware of them. Even if one knows that one is not alone, one can still feel lonely.

Finally one expands into the universe in a sphere circumscribed by the orbit of Saturn and beyond. As one grows in this way one gathers the forces needed to build up the next incarnation. Then one returns. One becomes ever smaller until one unites oneself again with the earth.

Between death and rebirth man expands into the whole cosmos and however strange it may appear, when we return to the earth we bring all the forces of the solar system with us into life and unite them with what is inherited out of the physical substances. By means of the cosmic forces we build up our physical body and our brain. Here between birth and death we dwell within the narrow confines of our physical body. After death we live, expanded, into the entire solar macrocosm.

The one person has a deep moral sense, the other less so. The one who on earth had a deep moral sense goes through the spiritual world in such a way that he can experience everything as a sociable being. The power for this flows from the starry realms. Another who is not thus prepared is unable to make any connections and because he did not bring any spiritualized forces with him, he also is unable to receive any moral predispositions. He will journey alone through the various spheres. Such spiritual knowledge throws significant light on everything that a man is and on his relationship to the world.

Kant uttered the saying, "There are two things that fill my mind with an ever new and increasing sense of wonder and devotion: The starry heavens above me and the moral law within me." He thereby expressed something significant.



Spiritual science reveals that both are one and the same. What we experience between death and rebirth we bring with us as moral law. We carry the starry heavens through which we journey between death and a new birth into our earthly life where it must become moral law.

Thus spiritual science brings us insight into the magnitude of the human soul and the idea of human responsibility.

## INTERCOURSE WITH THE DEAD

*Düsseldorf, April 27, 1913*