

RUDOLF STEINER, Ph., D.
*Relationships Between the Living
and the Dead*

Lecture in Hamburg, February 16th, 1916 (GA 168)

My dear friends:

Let us, first of all, turn our thoughts to those who stand out there upon the battlefields, where historic events are being enacted, and who must be answerable with body, soul and spirit for these tremendous happenings of the present time.

Spirits ever watchful. Guardians of their souls,
May your vibrations waft,
to the Earth-men committed to your charge.
Our souls' petitioning love:
That, united with your power,
Our prayer may helpfully radiate
To the souls it lovingly seeks.

And for those who, in consequence of these events, have already passed through the gate of death: —

Spirits ever watchful. Guardians of their souls,
May your vibrations waft,
To the Men of the Spheres committed to your charge,
Our souls' petitioning love:
That, united with your power,
Our prayer may helpfully radiate
To the souls it lovingly seeks.

And that Spirit whom we seek to know through our Spiritual Science, who passed through the Mystery of Golgotha for the salvation of the earth, for the progress and freedom of mankind — may He be with you and your difficult duties.

It is our striving to penetrate, knowingly and at the same time livingly, in so far as this is possible, into those worlds which are closed to the usual everyday knowledge, the usual intellectual knowledge — bound to the physical plane.

For, in the life in which man is enclosed in his physical body, he stands in a world, as we have become accustomed to think during the course of years, which is only a part, a small part, of the entire actual world. As we come together so seldom, it is not possible, at these meetings, to explain everything from its foundations. How well founded these things are, that must be spoken of at such meetings, which take place only at less frequent intervals, and by what means they are established — this we must assume to be known from other meetings and through our books. For particularly at such a gathering it may, indeed, be our desire to learn something more important and more essential about what has just been referred to, about the greater, real world, which embraces both the physical and the spiritual world.

Since we last gathered here, many things have taken place within the circle which nurtures our spiritual science. A larger number of our dear friends have passed through the portal of death. Also, since the beginning of this hard war time, friends have passed through the portal of death who had to take part directly in these great events. In other words, within

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our circle, we are ourselves touched by the great spiritual world, because souls who were among us have entered this spiritual world after laying aside their bodies. *IT LIES WITHIN THE ATTITUDE* which results from our Spiritual Science *THAT, for us, THE SOULS WHO HAVE LEFT THE PHYSICAL PLANE, WHO ARE RECEIVED BY ANOTHER WORLD, REMAIN UNITED WITH US, AS THEY WERE UNITED WITH US WHILE THEY STILL LOOKED AT US WITH PHYSICAL EYES AND COULD SPEAK TO US BY MEANS OF THE INSTRUMENT OF THE PHYSICAL BODY.*

Precisely when we approach the world which has received into itself our dead, in this moment, as *WE DRAW NEARER TO THE SOULS OF THE SO-CALLED DEAD, WE LEARN TO KNOW ALL THOSE SHATTERING EXPERIENCES WHICH MUST HEAP THEMSELVES UPON OUR SOUL* where it seeks to look across the threshold which separates us from the spiritual world, when it seeks to enter the world *WHICH CAN ONLY BE SEEN IN THE DISEMBODIED STATE OF THE SOUL.* And you will perhaps understand that many of the words spoken here today resound out of the many feelings which have passed through my own soul in the course of the year, since we last saw one another.

Particularly during the last year, I have often had to say to our friends, that the right confidence can be gained only gradually, by one who sees into the fundamental conditions of existence, when he knows that those who have passed through the portal of death and who were faithful fellow-workers here on earth, will remain so also after death; so that in our work we quite certainly do not lose those souls who have won an understanding of our work, because they were already united with us here before they passed through the portal of death. And just among such souls there are such faithful fellow-worker that we may say: Even if the enemies and the lack of understanding here on the physical plane are sometimes so strong in opposition to our work, and become ever stronger, as we can well see, yet we may still have faith that *SPIRITUAL SCIENCE WILL PENETRATE INTO THE EVOLUTION OF MANKIND, BECAUSE WE CAN WIN THIS FAITH THROUGH OUR CONNECTION WITH THE DISEMBODIED SOULS WHO HAVE REACHED AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE WHOLE SIGNIFICANCE OF OUR WORK FOR THE COURSE OF MAN'S DEVELOPMENT.*

Of course, just when the human being, by means of his opened soul, approaches the world in which the so-called dead are — we can speak in this way, although it is, of course, the entire spiritual world in which the dead are to be found — precisely then, when the human being is able to approach this world as a visitor, as one who accompanies the dead into the spiritual world, he learns to know again and again that which has also been emphasised here: that, in reality, the concepts, the percepts and ideas which we form concerning the world, since we form them as we do because we are in a physical body, must be changed, must be made pliant, flexible, so that they can also encompass the secrets of the spiritual world. *THE MAN OF TODAY IS ADAPTED VERY STRONGLY TO THE PURELY MATERIAL PERCEPTION OF HIS SURROUNDINGS, AND THUS HE ALSO FORMS CONCEPTS ACCORDING TO A PURELY MATERIAL PERCEPTION.* For this reason, it becomes especially difficult for him to penetrate into the spiritual world even by means of concepts. In fact, many people believe that it is not possible to attain to an understanding of the spiritual world, if we are not able to see into it. They believe this, however, only because their ideas have become stiff and dead, through the fact that they have too strongly accustomed themselves to think only about the physical world.

Now that I have made these introductory remarks, I should like to speak to you today particularly about certain things in connection with the life of the so-called dead.

We know that, if we wish to consider the life between death and a new birth, *WE MUST CONSIDER AND NOTICE CAREFULLY HOW THE HUMAN BEING FORMS HIMSELF OF FOUR PARTS,* which are well known to us: physical body, etheric body, astral body and Ego.

If we consider, to begin with, the most outward fact regarding the dead a fact visible *even from the physical plane,* we find it to be the fact that man lays aside his physical body. We do not need to go into the different ways by which this physical body becomes united with the earth, be it by means of fire or decay — these differ, after all, only in regard to the time which they require.

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But, even when we consider this fact, that the physical body falls away from the whole being of man in the moment of death and unites itself with the earth, as we say, — if we consider even this fact only with regard to its meaning for the physical plane, we shall have considered it, in reality, in a very inadequate way. And, in fact, it is often considered in a most inadequate way by persons of all manner of spiritual-scientific tendencies, who allow themselves still to be led astray by all sorts of moral conceptions, which do indeed penetrate into spiritual realms, to a certain extent, but are unfitted, in many respects, *TO UNDERSTAND IN THE RIGHT WAY THE PENETRATION OF THE SPIRITUAL INTO THE PHYSICAL WORLD.*

All physical events have also their spiritual significance. There is no physical event which has not, at the same time, a spiritual significance. In this case, then, the physical event is that our physical body falls away from us and is at the same time separated into its parts, into its molecules, into its atoms, and given over to the earth.

Now, it is a great prejudice of the modern materialistic world-conception, which has, however, held mankind more or less in its grip already for a long time, that the human body, as we carry it about from birth until death, or let us say from conception until death, that this human body simply falls into the smallest possible parts, into atoms, and that these atoms are then incorporated in the earth, or the sphere of the earth, and thereafter remain atoms, and then pass over as such into other beings.

Through the modern materialistic mode of investigation one comes very easily to such a preconception. But *THIS MODE OF CONCEPTION IS, AFTER ALL, NOTHING BUT NONSENSE, IN VIEW OF SPIRITUAL SCIENCE.* It is nonsense. For, in reality, there are no such things as atoms, in the sense in which the chemists assume them. What the smallest parts of our bodies finally become, under all circumstances, regardless of the way in which we, as bodies, are united with the earth, is *warmth.* *OUR WHOLE PHYSICAL ORGANISM FINALLY TRANSFORMS ITSELF,* in reality, in one way or another, in a short or a long time, *INTO WARMTH.*

For this reason, we often speak, as you know, in spiritual science of warmth as a fourth physical state of aggregation, whereas physics does not acknowledge it as such, but only as a kind of characteristic. But it is this warmth which is, in reality, given to the earth; this is given over to the earth. Thus, *FROM OUR PHYSICAL BODY, WE GIVE TO OUR EARTH — WARMTH.*

The warmth which is to be found in the earth, is, in reality, intimately connected with what human beings leave behind. Man does not transform himself into air, water, etc. These are only transitional stages through which he passes. Those parts of him which become air and water become at last warmth. Yes, even though it may be after a long time, even though the last remnants of matter may pass over into warmth only after hundreds of years, indeed, even though what belongs to the bone-system may pass over into warmth only after thousands of years, it is transformed finally into warmth.

If you go into Museums today, you will find skeletons of ancient men who lived upon earth in bygone ages, yet the time will indeed come when what is present there today as skeletons, will exist only as warmth within the body of the earth.

In any case, however, the way in which we are united with the earth, through warmth, is the materialistic way. The fact that even our physical body remains connected with the earth, has a great, an essential, importance for the one who has passed through the gate of death. He passes into the spiritual world. He leaves his body to the earth. This is an experience, an event, for the so-called dead. *HE HAS THE EXPERIENCE: — “YOUR BODY PASSES AWAY FROM YOU.” WE MUST REALISE THAT THIS IS AN EXPERIENCE.*

What is an experience? Well, you can form a conception of what it is, if you consider the experiences on the physical plane. It is an experience, if you have some new sensation, or feeling which you have never had before, and you learn to understand this. You have added something to your soul which you did not possess before a new concept, a new perception.

But now imagine such a small experience increased into a very great one. It is something mighty, something unfathomably mighty, that the human being experiences, which gives him the possibility between death and birth to see, to realise, to grasp the fact that he lays this physical body aside, that he gives over to the planet which he is leaving. It is a very great experience, an experience which naturally cannot be compared with any

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experience on earth — a mighty experience. *THE VALUE OF AN EXPERIENCE LIES IN THE FACT THAT SOMETHING REMAINS IN OUR SOUL AS A RESULT, AS A CONSEQUENCE*, of this experience. We may, therefore, ask the question: — What then remains as a result, as a consequence of this experience of the falling away of the physical body from the entirety of our being?

Indeed, if we were not able to have this experience when we pass through the gate of death, of knowingly participating in the falling away of our physical body, *WE SHOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO DEVELOP AN EGO-CONSCIOUSNESS AFTER DEATH*. The Ego consciousness is aroused after death through this experience of the falling away of the physical body. For the dead it is of the greatest significance that he is able to say: — “I see my physical body slipping away from me and disappearing.” And, on the other hand: — “I see growing within me, out of this event, the feeling — I am an Ego.”

We may express this with the paradox words: — “If we were unable to experience our death from the other side, we would not have an Ego-consciousness after death.”

Just as the human soul entering existence through birth or, let us say, through conception — gradually becomes accustomed to the use of the physical apparatus and thereby acquires the Ego-consciousness within the body, so does the human being acquire the Ego consciousness after death, from the other side of existence, through the fact that he experiences the falling away of the physical body from the whole human being.

Consider now, for a moment, what this means. When we contemplate Death from the physical side of existence, we may say that it appears to us as the end of existence — as that which has beyond it, as far as the physical outlook is concerned, “Nothing”. Viewed from the other side, Death as such is a most wonderful thing, which can ever anew stand before man's soul. For it signifies that man can always have the feeling of the victory of spiritual life over physical life. And just as long as we can always have before us the conception of our birth here, in physical life — for no one can have the conceptual nature of his birth through physical means alone, indeed, no one knows anything about his birth through his own physical experience — just so surely do we always have before us, when we become fully conscious after death, a direct experience of the event of our death.

At the same time, this event of our death contains nothing which is in any way depressing; on the contrary, this death event, viewed from the other side, is the greatest, most wonderful and beautiful event which can appear before our soul. For it always places before us, in its entirety, the greatness of the idea that in the spiritual world, consciousness, self-consciousness is the result of death — that death stimulates this self-consciousness, in the spiritual world.

Secondly, we must observe the second member of our human existence, the etheric body. We find, with the help of the elementary presentations which we have all shared in, in the interval since we last met together, that this ether-body remains with us for a brief — a relatively brief — period after death, but after this, it is also laid aside. We know, too, that a certain importance must be attributed to the fact that our etheric body — the same one we possessed on earth — remains still united with us after death, for several days.

So long as we still carry this etheric body, after having laid aside our physical body, we can still think everything that we were able to think during our physical existence. *We can, therefore, survey all the thoughts which we carry in us, as in a mighty picture. We see those thoughts which we experienced during life, in the life-picture which has often been described to you.* Our whole life lies before us like a panorama, during the days in which we still carry our etheric body with us; and we have it before us simultaneously, i.e. we see it all at one glance. For, what we call memory, here, in the physical world, arises, to be sure, in the etheric body, but it is bound, nevertheless, to the physical body. This physical body we have laid aside. We see our thoughts. We do not draw them out of the depths that are connected with the physical body, but we see them; and we survey, as if in a panorama, the life which we have just passed through.

We then lay aside this etheric body. But this etheric body which we lay aside, remains visible for us, throughout our entire remaining life after death. It is outside, but it remains

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visible to us. It unites itself with the whole universe; nevertheless, whatever happens to it there, remains visible to us — we see it.

And this is one of the mysteries of death: that, so long as we carry our etheric body, we see in a panorama what we had in us in the form of thoughts while we were alive — we survey, as it were, *WHAT IS OUTSIDE US AS BEING UNITED WITH, WOVEN INTO, THE WORLD*; we see that, after death, it forms part of our surrounding world, not of our Ego. In this experience, it actually is as if that which weaved and lived in us as our etheric body, during life, were now entering the life of the etheric world outside.

Then comes the time, as you know, when we carry with us — of that which we carried here on the physical plane — only the Ego and the astral body, and when we, of course, look back upon what we were. We then experience ourselves in an entirely different way from the way we did in the physical body — *WE EXPERIENCE OURSELVES WITH AN ENHANCED CONSCIOUSNESS, WITH A CONSCIOUSNESS WHICH DEATH HAS FOUNDED IN US*.

We must never think, for instance, as the fanatics so easily do, that this life between death and a new birth is an unconscious experience for the soul. Connected with this life, is a stronger, more intensive consciousness, than is the consciousness belonging to the physical body — only that it has an entirely different form. And, of course, we can approach the way in which we should imagine the dead, only by taking all that Spiritual Science can give us, to help us to transform those conceptions which are suited to purely physical objects and events here on the physical plane.

Thus we now live, as we see, within our Ego and our astral body. We have cast off our etheric body. It is united with objective existence.

For one who is able to enter the spiritual world, it is a moving experience, indeed — and from this standpoint also, I may say — to visit and accompany the dead with whom one is able to find a contact; it is a moving experience to follow, not only the individual life of the dead between death and a new birth, but also, for instance, to follow what the dead behold: that part of himself which is now contained, as his etheric body, in the woof of the world, which is now for him an exterior world, an objective world. It is deeply moving to observe what the dead has just given over to the etheric world. Thus we may experience the dead in a twofold way, as it were. We can experience that part of him which he has passed on to the etheric world; and we can experience also that part which contains his consciousness after death.

I repeat, that this first contact with what the dead leave behind in the etheric world, is deeply moving. It would move us even if we were unable to come into contact with the Being itself, which continues to live between death and a new birth, and which carries both the consciousness and the self-consciousness of the deceased, but could come into contact only with what he had left behind. Even then this kind of experience would move our souls most deeply — it would have that moving quality peculiar to all contacts with the spiritual world.

And a part of what especially moves us is the actual, living experience that such spiritual substance as has here been indicated — indeed, that etheric spiritual thing which has been left behind by the dead — is, in reality, always round about us. Just so truly as we are living in the air which surrounds man everywhere, just so truly are we, at the same time, surrounded by what the dead have left behind them, as etheric spirituality. In this world, in which we stand, even with our physical bodies there is also that spiritual element which I have just mentioned. Just as we are surrounded by the air, so are we, in the same way, surrounded by what the dead leave behind. It is only states of consciousness that sever us from the spiritual world — we are not separated from them through spatial conditions, but only through conditions of consciousness.

Consider, for instance, the following fact: — Let us imagine a human being who is striving to carry out the following soul exercises. But I should like to emphasize that such soul-exercises must be carried out in perfect calmness of soul. If anyone becomes in any way excited through these exercises, he will damage himself. If soul-exercises are carried on in the way described here and in our literature, so that they are real soul-exercises, and our

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physical being does not take part in them, then they can never damage a human being in the very least — they cannot even damage his soul. Yet we should not on the other hand, be able to penetrate into spiritual knowledge, did we not call attention to such things, now and again.

Let us suppose that someone does the following exercise, and that he says to himself: — With my eyes I see red, blue, etc. And now he proceeds by experiencing something that is in a certain sense alive — when he sees red, blue green, etc.

Gradually, we begin to realise that, after all, we live in the physical world — especially our modern materialistic age — in a very coarse way — that we do not notice the finer experiences which come to us.

This finer element may be experienced if we take notice of the more purely soul-impression made upon us — let us say by colours — but also by other sense-impressions. Of course everybody knows, roughly speaking, that when he looks upon a blue surface, the impression it leaves will not be the same as that left by a red surface. A red surface — and I must emphasize this particularly — even when a person is not made nervous by looking at it, has something that attacks something which comes out of the surface, as it were, and thrusts itself at us. Whereas blue, for instance, awakens the opposite sensation — it remains quietly in its place; nothing comes toward us, out of the blue. On the contrary, we feel — if we are able to accompany colour-impressions with a fine feeling — that we can penetrate into this blue with our soul forces, that we can press through it.

Green is, as it were, in a rythmical state of balance. This is why it has so beneficent an effect upon us, as the plant's covering of the earth. Green works upon us in such a way that we are able, in part, to penetrate into it, while at the same time it comes back again toward us. When we look out upon the wide green field, we have this impression, that we enter into something; yet, at the same time, that it comes toward us. This is what constitutes the refreshing effect made upon us by a wide green field.

You will be able to convince yourselves of this fact: that human beings have noticed that it is possible to live with colour as it were, and if you read in *GOETHE'S THEORY OF COLOURS* — which, to be sure, is understood by very few persons of today — *THE CHAPTER ON THE ETHICAL EFFECTS OF COLOURS*, you will find indicated the corresponding feeling to be experienced through each colour. Thus we find that we can experience colours ... we can also experience other sense-impressions; but, for the moment, we are speaking about colours, in order to have an example.

We can live with colours in such a way that blue, for example, calls to life in our souls a force that resembles the longing which goes forth from us and which is taken up kindly by blue.

In the case of red, something always arises which seems to come toward us and will not leave us alone — something that wishes to overpower us, as it were.

When we thus feel colours, we may have a soul-experience — a moral soul-experience, as it were. Of course, not every human being can carry on such experiences in any one incarnation; but I am describing them to you, in order that you may see how the different worlds are interrelated.

If, accordingly, *A MAN WERE TO CARRY ON THESE EXERCISES, HE WOULD LIVE FAR MORE PURELY IN THE WORLD OF COLOURS. AND IF HE DID THEM IN CONNECTION WITH OTHER SENSE-IMPRESSIONS, HE WOULD LIKewise LIVE MORE PURELY IN THE OTHER SENSE-IMPRESSIONS.* In that case, however, something else would very soon have to arise — something different would take place.

Suppose that such a person were to experience the blue sky in this living way; he would in this case, not simply have the blue above him, (this is, moreover, a very subjective blue; for, in reality, there is no vault above us) but he would feel it above him as the inner surface of a beneficent, inner hemisphere, everywhere receiving his soul-life — a hemisphere, behind the apparent surface of which the soul's experience could penetrate.

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It is because of this that human beings who experience the world in a deeper sense, speak as did Jacob Böhme, for instance, who did not say: — “When we see the blue vault of heaven ...”, but, rather: — “When we see the depths”. In these words, “When we see the depths”, we find contained the whole experience of “blue”.

But there is another parallel phenomenon which arises, if we so completely penetrate into the life of colour, that soul-experiences begin to light up when we see colours. There is then awakened in us the ability to make use of a very brief space of time, which we should otherwise not use at all.

When you face an exterior object in ordinary physical life, you see it — you see a certain colour. And, indeed, this is the starting-point of your impression. Then you are able to think about it. You can form a conceptual idea of the colour. But it is with the act of vision that you begin to live with the object. Yet, nevertheless, this is not the actual beginning of what takes place. Even the modern physiologist, working in the laboratories, knows that a certain time elapses between the effect upon our eye, and the arising of the idea connected with the colour blue. Thus, we see that, first of all, the blue colour works upon our eye. We do not immediately perceive it, but a certain time elapses, and only then do we become conscious of it.

You may read, even in ordinary books, how experiments connected with these things are carried on nowadays in the laboratories. Certain kinds of apparatus are constructed; and then the attempt is made to cause a certain impression — the student is the experimental rabbit. He must register, by means of another apparatus, when he receives the impression, so that one can establish the small fraction of time which elapses between the moment an impression strikes our sense-organs, and the moment we grow conscious of this. *A CERTAIN SPACE OF TIME ELAPSES. IN THIS SHORT INTERVAL, WE DO NOT AS YET, FOR INSTANCE, EXPERIENCE THE BLUE COLOUR, (in the case of an impression of blue), BUT WE DO EXPERIENCE THE MORAL EFFECT OF THE COLOUR.* This works in us. *THUS*, the whole process of how the soul pours itself into the blue colour, how it is accepted with a kindly pleasure — all this lives in us already — *THE SOUL-ELEMENT OF THE COLOUR IS ACTIVE IN US BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE.* Only, *THIS ACTIVITY REMAINS UNCONSCIOUS*; man does not perceive it. Man does not begin to develop his consciousness of the colour, until the colour arises. He does not notice what precedes the colour-sensation.

Now, let us think for a moment: when one is impelled to notice more particularly this moral impression of colours, this soul-experience of colours, then something special appears. We notice this when we should colour some sort of a surface — i.e. when we paint, or transmit colours in any way at all, which ought first to arise out of thoughts. In any *real* painting, the artist works out of the soul-impression of the colours. In this case, it is not as it is with the artist who simply uses a model — who simply imitates the model; but, rather the real artist knows that, because he has called forth a particular soul-impression, he must therefore use red; whereas, on some other surface, he uses blue, because he has called forth this or that soul-impression.

THIS IS THE WAY, you see, IN WHICH ALL OF THE PAINTING HAS BEEN WORKED OUT IN OUR DORNACH BUILDING. The application of the colours has here arisen entirely out of the soul-element — which indeed must then shine through the colours. Yet, in order to achieve this, it was necessary, in the deepest sense of the word, first of all to have the Building in ourselves — as a Soul Being. *THE WAY IN WHICH THE BUILDING FACES THE WORLD WILL BE IDENTICAL WITH THE WAY IN WHICH IT HAS GROWN OUT OF “THE BUILDING”, AS A SOUL-BEING.*

People would perceive the thing out of which this Dornach Building has grown, were they able to make use of that short interval of time elapsing between the moment in which the Building strikes their sense-organs, and the moment in which the impression reaches their consciousness.

Any one, moreover, who has a share in the erection of the Building, must himself create all that is in it — its forms and colours — out of that short interval of time.

I have led you in a more scientific way, I might say, to something which may appear difficult to you. But we must also overcome difficulties such as these. Moreover, the

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possibility may arise, even in this modern Age, as if through an act of grace — and, in a certain sense, we are constantly being favoured by an act of grace, through the simple fact that we are in the world — for man to hold fast, in some way, to this moment. He will see something, and will at times be able to feel that something reciprocal has taken place between himself and the object which he sees outside — if he succeeds in bringing it to his consciousness. He will say to himself, when he sees something: — When I am looking at it, it seems almost as if I had already seen it before this moment.

Perhaps you have all become familiar with the experience of facing a being or an object, and then feeling, as it were, as if, after all, it is not there before you for the first time, when it makes an impression on your consciousness, but that it had already come nearer — indeed, it had come quite close. This creeping nearer — as one might call it — can indeed at times be observed. But, in ordinary life, what here takes place within this brief space of time, lies beyond our consciousness — beyond the threshold.

The moment we are able to bring into our consciousness what thus lies just beyond the threshold, we make an important spiritual discovery. I shall again bring it to your minds by citing a special case. Many of you have already heard about this. Perhaps I have also mentioned it here, in this place. Last year, a little boy died in close proximity to the Goetheanum Building; he was crushed by a furniture-van. The etheric body of this little boy is now united with the Dornach Building — forms the aura of the Dornach Building and lives in this aura. And when some artistic work must be carried out, in connection with this Building, forces come out of this etheric body, which then, of course, appears enlarged. We can feel these forces in us, in the same way that we feel the Building within our souls.

Why is this so? *BECAUSE THE WORLD* of which I have just spoken — that world *WHICH IS ALWAYS ROUND ABOUT US*, but which we do not perceive because it remains unnoticed until its impressions reach us — *CONTAINS THE ETHERIC BODIES OF THE DEAD, AND THE DEAD ARE LOOKING ON THESE BODIES*. What the dead see of our world — what the dead look upon — is contained in the etheric world which surrounds us. And *WE SHOULD ALWAYS SEE IT*, if we could, so to speak, look into it before we look out into the physical world — if we were able to take even a little step across the threshold.

THIS DOES NOT, HOWEVER, PREVENT THE DEAD FROM BEING ACTIVE IN THIS WORLD, through what they have left behind. We are surrounded by a world in which the etheric bodies of the dead are living. *In some way or other, they are connected with that world*. And only because what lives in the etheric must first come into contact with our physical body, and must set the physical apparatus into movement, *do we fail to perceive this powerful weaving around us, of what the dead leave behind them, in etheric form, in our world*. But we must acquire the feeling that it is our duty to enrich our world, in our conceptual ideas, by including in it, in the first place, what is contained in the whole etheric world, through the etheric bodies of the dead.

The dead themselves are not in this world — but only the etheric bodies which they have left behind. *We cannot find the dead themselves in so easy a way — although even this “easy way” is difficult*.

The dead, *after they have laid aside their etheric bodies, continue to live in their astral bodies and their Egos*. You can gauge to what extent we must transform our conceptions, if you bear in mind that everything pertaining to thought, is stripped off with our etheric bodies, which pass over into the exterior etheric world. *AFTER DEATH, WE DO NOT KEEP THE THOUGHTS WHICH WE HAVE COLLECTED HERE, IN OUR PHYSICAL BODY. ALL THAT PERTAINS TO THOUGHT BECOMES AN EXTERIOR WORLD*. The one who has died, does not look upon his thoughts after death in the same way in which he looked upon thoughts which he formed during his life, and which he then remembered and drew up out of his sub-consciousness. After death he looks upon his *THOUGHTS AS IF THEY WERE AN ETHERIC PAINTING*; he sees his thoughts in the world outside. Thoughts are something exterior for one who has passed through the portal of death — they are outside. *WHAT REVEALS ITSELF HERE THROUGH FEELING AND WILL, REMAINS CONNECTED WITH OUR INDIVIDUALITY*. It continues to live in *OUR ASTRAL BODY AND IN OUR EGO*.

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Our Ego lights up in self-consciousness through the contemplation of the moment of death. Our astral body is kindled because the thoughts contained in the picture before us, penetrate into the astral body. Thus we experience them in our astral body.

In the physical body, on the other hand, we experience thoughts by drawing them up from within us. After death, we experience thoughts by looking at them as we look at the stars, or as we look out at the world and the mountains, and they make an impression upon us; we take up this impression and experience it in our astral body and our Ego. Thus we see that just the opposite thing takes place: Whereas here on Earth we look upon thoughts as something within us, we must consider them as being something external, after death. Our life then dissolves in the world, flows out in the world.

It is important for us to bear this in mind and not to adopt the idea that the world after death is like a fine, thin repetition of the physical world here — an idea which is often accepted in spiritist circles. It is in fact something entirely different. And it is different, for the reason that our thoughts are Beings outside of us. Now, at the moment we begin to call up before our souls, conceptual ideas like these, we notice not only that we need a certain freedom from prejudice, as I might say, in order to accept Spiritual Science, but also that we must have a certain kind of ability to render our concepts more fluid, to transform our concepts — and that we cannot claim to be able to picture what is in the spiritual world with the same concepts and ideas which we have here, in the physical world.

Consequently, one who is in a position to visit — let us say — a so-called dead person, must first learn how to carry on this intercourse with the dead. Whereas, here, when we meet a person, we come into contact with his inner life through the fact that he expresses this inner life in words or gestures, we find instead, *IN THE CASE OF THE DEAD*, that if we wish to come into contact with him, *HE SHOWS US WHAT HE WISHES TO TELL US IN THE OBJECTIVE WORLD. WE SEE, AS IT WERE, IN THE FORM OF IMAGINATIONS*, which he shows us, what it is that he experiences, and what he wishes to say to us. I might say that the dead person, when we ask him something, says to us: Look over there — it is there that you will find what I am now experiencing.

But all of this is a rapid process. The dead, accordingly, as you see from what I have said, have the capacity to see supersensibly the thoughts which we, here on earth, can experience only in an inward, invisible way. Only if we acquire the capacity to behold thoughts in union with him, are we able to share in his experience, for this reason, he has the special capacity, as a dead person — as a so-called dead person — to share with us the experience of our thoughts.

We are particularly struck by this in the case of a certain phenomenon which I should like to touch upon. When someone whom we have loved has departed from us, we continue, as we all know, to cherish our thoughts of him within our souls. We think about the experiences we have had in common, about the feelings we have shared with him, and so forth. The dead person, as I have said, beholds thoughts. He can also see our thoughts, and he can even distinguish very soon the thoughts which he himself has, in the form of impressions of the spiritual world — these are Imaginations of what is contained in the spiritual world, and thoughts living in the soul of a human being who is still dwelling in a physical body. He can distinguish these thoughts. His own inner experience enables him to make this distinction. For, you see, the difference is really very great. *WHEN A DECEASED PERSON (AND EXACTLY THE SAME THING APPLIES TO AN INITIATE) HAS TO EXPERIENCE A THOUGHT ABOUT SOMETHING WHICH EXISTS ONLY IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD, HE MUST HIMSELF EXPERIENCE THIS THOUGHT, ACTIVELY.* He must himself first follow the thought — every position of it, as it were. It is difficult to make this process clear; but I might explain it as follows: — Suppose a painting were hanging before us, here. But supposing you were to see this painting only when you yourself had traced its lines and painted its colours — followed all the details. This is what the dead can do. He paints every thought he sees; he himself creates the thoughts anew, as it were, and experiences his own activity. *A LARGE PORTION OF THE LIFE BETWEEN DEATH AND A NEW BIRTH CONSISTS IN THIS — IN A CREATIVE COPYING OF WHAT EXISTS IN THE SPIRITUAL*

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WORLD AS THOUGHT-FORMATIONS. We must learn to create these anew, with the dead — then we know that these are forms of thought which pertain only to the spiritual world.

THE EXPERIENCE IS DIFFERENT WHEN WE LOOK DOWN FROM THE SPIRITUAL WORLD UPON THE THOUGHTS LIVING IN THE HUMAN BEINGS WHO HAVE BEEN LEFT BEHIND IN THE PHYSICAL WORLD. In this case, *IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO RE-CREATE THEM; BUT THESE THOUGHTS ACTUALLY COME TO MEET US, SO THAT THE DEAD PERSON CAN REMAIN PASSIVE.* Just as a flower does not need first to be drawn or painted by us, but immediately makes an impression upon us, so it is with the thoughts coming from those who are still alive. These thoughts actually arise in a way similar to the way in which impressions arise, here in the physical world.

AND THIS IS JUST WHAT UPLIFTS, GLADDENS AND WARMS THE DEAD, in the thoughts of the living whom they have loved. For it is a very special sphere of activity for the dead — this being able to look into the thoughts of those whom they have left behind and who loved them. *THIS IS A SPECIAL WORLD FOR THEM.*

It would be possible — would it not — for us to experience the physical world, as if it contained only what arises in the mineral, animal and vegetable kingdom and in the kingdom of man. In this case, for example, the physical world would contain no Art. Art would have to be added to all this — it would have to be created in addition to what we actually need. Yet Art is the very element which, from a soul-aspect of human evolution, must not be absent in the world, in spite of the fact that Nature would be just as perfect as it is, even if there were no Art. Thus, the dead could go on living, if necessary — although it would be like the human being living in a barren, lifeless, naked world of Nature, a world devoid of Art — were the peculiar circumstance to arise that everyone who had died were to be immediately forgotten, after death, by those who had loved him. Whatever can be seen as thoughts, remaining in the souls of those who love the dead, is something which is, to be sure, an additional element, going beyond the immediate requirements of the world of the dead; yet, at the same time, it uplifts and beautifies the life of the dead. It cannot be compared with Art in the physical world — that is to say, it can be compared, but the comparison is a lame one — for it means for the dead, as I have said, an uplifting, a beautifying element, yet in a far higher sense than the beautifying influence of Art is for us, here, in the physical world.

Thus it is deeply significant for the whole existence of the world, if we unite our thoughts with the thoughts of the dead, and especially if we do this in the form which we have often spoken about, here. Above all, we should approach the dead with thoughts clothed in that language, in that language of concepts which is common both to the living and to the dead — in the language which we speak here, in Spiritual Science. For the dead understand what constitutes the contents of Spiritual Science, just as well as do the living. And, moreover, it never becomes alien to the dead.

It is precisely through the bringing together of conceptual ideas such as these, I believe, that we shall be able gradually to form a plastic picture of the spiritual world. We can thus find our way into what lies beyond the threshold — whence, in reality, there flows forth all that exists for us on this side of the threshold.

In the face of these phenomena, we must bear in mind that present-day humanity is shortsighted in its vision of the world — and this is justified, to be sure, because it forms part of the universal plan — at the same time, it really is more shortsighted than it needs to be. For, you see, when a materialistic person of the present day forms his ideas, his conceptions of the world, he thinks that these are the universally-accepted human ideas and conceptions. You know how difficult it is to convince a materialistically-minded person that there are also other ways of thinking than his own. The standpoint taken by the materialist causes him to say that anyone who does not think as he does is a fool. There is no greater inward intolerance than that of a materialist.

Hence, a materialistic person actually thinks, generally speaking: — “Oh, of course, in the past, men thought all manner of things as to the existence of the spiritual; they could hardly move a step, in their daily life, without suspecting the presence of spirits everywhere, or indeed without seeing them. But all this was sheer fancy — now, at last, we have progressed so far that we have discarded this childish play of the human race.”

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And yet it would seem as if human beings ought to be able to see at each step how nonsensical such a conception really is.

I shall try to make this clear to you, by citing an example, which may appear to be far-fetched, and from an entirely different side than the one we have discussed today in essence.

Let us think, for a moment, about that picture, which we have often discussed from various aspects, relating to the first stage of human evolution on earth — of man's life in Paradise, as we find it described in the Bible. Let us think about this picture of Adam and Eve in Paradise, the first human beings — Eve biting into the apple and giving the apple to Adam. Let us think of the picture of the Serpent on the Tree, tempting Eve.

When the painter of our day paints this picture — and even today, the modern painters still occasionally *do* paint it — he paints it, to be sure, in such a way that the picture will show a woman as true to Nature as possible, and a still more naturalistic man, because this is modern ... Impressionism, Expressionism, and I do not know what else; in any case, a very naturalistic woman and a still more naturalistic man, then a naturalistic landscape, and a naturalistic serpent showing, of course, greedy naturalistic teeth, etc. This is actually the way it is painted.

Painters have not always painted in this way, however; for such a picture would not render the true facts, as we know them. We know that in the Serpent, we may recognize a symbol of the real Tempter, Lucifer. Moreover, Lucifer is a Being who, as we know, remained behind during the Moon Period, and who — in the way in which he appears during the Earth Period — may be symbolized by the Serpent. Nevertheless, the Serpent is not Lucifer, and this must somehow become evident, spiritually. In other words, this Lucifer must also be seen with the forces of the soul — he must be seen from within, through the effort of inner forces.

How is it possible to see him, my dear friends? Indeed, we bear within us all the impressions of Lucifer. We actually carry them about within us. Just as we carry about the impressions of Ahriman, so we carry these in us, also.

Now I shall explain to you as briefly as possible, without any proofs or detailed explanations — these you must find for yourselves, in our already existing literature on this subject — how it is possible to form a conception of Lucifer.

MAN CARRIES ABOUT WITHIN HIM THE IMPULSES OF LUCIFER. They live in him in such a way that they are *CENTRED IN HIS HEAD*, and *FROM THERE THEY PERMEATE THE ASTRAL BODY WHERE THE LUCIFERIC PRINCIPLE HAS REMAINED WITHIN HIM*; that is to say they force their way into his head — whereas otherwise it is the Spirits of Form which have moulded his head — and *THEY ALSO FORCE THEIR WAY* into what is formed by the astral force *INTO THE SPINAL CORD*.

Thus, *IF WE WERE TO DRAW THE HEAD OF A MAN AND PROLONGATION, THE SPINE, THE RESULT WOULD BE A SERPENT, A SERPENT LIKE FORM, WITH A HUMAN HEAD.* Of course, the whole thing should be imagined as an astral form — the head to some extent still resembling a human head, and the spinal cord appended to it and turning around like a serpent. Imagine this projected objectively — and you will have a serpent with a human head. That is, Lucifer viewed externally, in the form of an image, assumes the aspect of a serpent with a *human* head. Not a serpent with a *serpent's* head, for that would no longer be a Lucifer — that would be an earthly serpent, which has already, as an earthly creature, been subjected to the influence of the Spirits of Form.

Hence, if a painter wished to paint Lucifer on the Tree, he would have to imagine the Serpent coiled around the Tree with a human head looking out above. He would then be painting out of the knowledge gained through our Spiritual Science.

Thus, *WE SHOULD HAVE TO PICTURE ADAM AND EVE BY THE SIDE OF THE TREE, AND — COILED INTO THE TREE — THE ASTRAL SHAPE OF THE SPINAL CORD, RESEMBLING, AS I HAVE SAID, A SERPENT BODY, TOGETHER WITH THE IMAGE OF THE HUMAN HEAD.* If the woman Eve, sees it first, it will, of course, take on the form of a woman's face.

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If you go into the Museum here, and look at the painting of Master Bertram, you will see there, that in the Middle Ages this kind of serpent was still portrayed coiled on the Tree, as I have explained. It is most striking and sublime; for it proves to us that a painter living in the very heart of the Middle Ages could paint from out of the true and real concepts of the spiritual world. This is an undeniable proof for the fact that we need not go back so very many centuries; and there are many documents, still existing today, to show us that in those days people still knew something of what our present materialistic humanity has already forgotten.

Of course, in an exterior history of Art, this fact which I have just mentioned is never touched upon. Nevertheless, anyone — by adopting not only the modern materialistic attitude, but also the materialistic standpoint or conception — can convince himself that both the vision of the spiritual, and the disappearance of this vision, are events of only a few centuries ago. Anyone here in Hamburg can convince himself of this, by going to the Museum and looking at this Paradise-picture of Master Bertram, he will find, there, the irrefutable proof, furnished on the physical plane, that it was not at all so long ago that men were able, *BY MEANS OF ATAVISTIC CLAIRVOYANCE* — as we may call it — *TO LOOK INTO THE SPIRITUAL WORLD, AND TO HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF ITS MYSTERIES IN A WAY THAT WAS ENTIRELY DIFFERENT FROM THE WAY OF TODAY.*

We need only think how blindly people go through the world today; how, if they only wished to do so, they could convince themselves, even externally, on the physical plane that evolution takes place, in the human race.

The significant fact is that during the course of the last three to four centuries, the formerly extant, more atavistic and unconscious clairvoyance has been disappearing. For, naturally, Master Bertram would not have been able to develop Spiritual Science. He merely saw, still saw in the etheric world, what Lucifer was really like, and then painted him accordingly. It was an unconscious, instinctive clairvoyance.

In order that man should acquire the external form of vision, the old way of looking at the spiritual world had to disappear. But it must be acquired anew by man. And the time must gradually come, only of course, this must be in the sphere of consciousness — when what has been lost, must be striven after anew. For this reason, the way must be prepared by Spiritual Science. People can approach the spiritual world again only if they study Spiritual Science. But this Spiritual Science must really bring an insight into the spiritual world.

Today it is possible to prove scientifically, as it were how far natural science can bring the world forward. When a scientifically-trained person today speaks about such matters, he really speaks about the soul-apparatus, about the bodily instrument of soul-life. Now, if you try to investigate in the descriptions available today — they are generally called *psycho-physiology* — even those written by the most significant modern scientists, you will find there, what they have to say about the soul-instrument. You will find that these people express themselves, everywhere, in a most peculiar way. They say, for instance: — Let us consider the life of impressions and reactions, and the life of conceptual ideas; to this life of impressions and conceptual ideas belongs, in every case, the soul-apparatus. And then they describe what happens in the brain and in the nervous system when a man has impressions or forms conceptions. The parallel bodily process can always be found. But when these scientists approach feeling and the will, they cannot find a parallel bodily process. They cannot find anything.

That a thing like this does not come to light, but remains unnoticed, is due only to the fact that natural science and its rear-guard — we cannot really say rear-guard, because a rearguard is useful, and the monistic rear-guard of natural science is entirely superfluous — because natural science and its rearguard, the Monists, simply crow about the fact that for every process of thought and sensation, a certain physical parallel process is to be found, and that thought and sensation are bound to the brain. But they do not speak of shades of feeling or will. At the most, they speak of shades of feeling — in other words, a certain nuance of conceptual thought. But they do not go as far as feeling and will.

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And the honest scientists say: — Our science does not extend as far as feeling and will. You can read for yourselves what I have just said, in the natural-scientific literature. It is possible to corroborate it in all spheres of science. For instance, in the case of Dr. Th. Ziehen, the well known modern psychiatrist and psycho-physiologist — in his book, you can find most easily of all a confirmation of what I have just said. He points out the single processes which correspond to thought and to sensation. He goes as far as certain shades of feeling; but he does not reach to actual feeling and will. Thus he disavows feeling and will. They do not exist at all, he says.

NOW COULD WE REALLY FIND ANY CLEARER SCIENTIFIC PROOF THAN THIS, FOR THE FACT THAT NATURAL-SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT EXTENDS ONLY OVER THE SPHERE OF THE TEMPORAL — ONLY OVER THAT WHICH WE LAY ASIDE WITH DEATH; whereas, at the same time, there is something that extends beyond this, living, precisely, as I have indicated, in feeling and will, and yet so far removed from the body that the scientist simply does not find it, indeed he rejects it and disavows it!

This is, accordingly, the reason why the *SCIENTISTS BOAST THAT FEELING AND WILL DO NOT EXIST: BECAUSE THEY CANNOT BE FOUND BY THE ORDINARY SCIENCE.* Indeed, it is natural science itself, as we see, *THAT PROVES TO US TODAY THAT FEELING AND WILL ARE NOT BOUND TO THE BODY AS SUCH, LIKE THOUGHT AND SENSATION.*

This is connected with the fact that our thoughts separate themselves from us; after death they appear spread out, outside of us. Feeling and will remain ours. And out of feeling and will springs forth the power to create the thought-tableau. He who wishes to do so today, can show by means of what is strictly scientific, that *FEELING AND WILL* are not connected with what we call "Nature", but that, on the contrary, they pass out after death, as astral body and Ego, and *REMAIN UNITED WITH THE HUMAN INDIVIDUALITY — KINDLING THEMSELVES TO A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS*, in the way that I have described, through the fact that what spreads itself out is all etheric, that is, mirrors itself first in the astral body and then in the Ego when the astral body has been laid aside.

This is all as it should be. Modern science does not refute Spiritual Science, but confirms it. It really does confirm it. If it were possible to arouse even a little understanding, it would be seen that, for a right understanding, it is precisely an honest natural science that points to a justification of Spiritual Science, even in all its separate details.

Spiritual Science is, as you see — in view of all that has been said — something which must in our day begin to enter into the development of humanity, which must begin to have a grip on humanity, because otherwise the human race will reach the point where it will understand only the temporal, and when it will know nothing of the eternal, which lives in us. The time will come, when people will first recognise this, and when they will also concern themselves more with the development of their feeling-life. For only through feeling and will do we unite ourselves with the world which is not devoid of thought.

The objection might be made: — Very well, then, you feel the spiritual world, but you do not will it. But no, it is precisely through feeling and will that we are united with the objective thought-world — with the thoughts that live, and which we do not merely think. And just as truly as in the past mankind possessed a power of seeing into the spiritual world, just so truly will it have to win this power again in the future. Man will be able to win it again, however, only if he determines first to enter a little way into the thought-world which is no longer recognised by our generation, as coming from the spiritual world.

In order to attain this, a very great deal of what is rumoured about today as concept and percept will have to be corrected. Indeed, it would be hard to believe how thoughtlessly, as a matter of fact, human beings of today — allow me to use a paradox — how thoughtlessly human beings think. This really would be hard to believe. They make definitions which they are unshakably convinced are right, and cannot be refuted in any way. It belongs to the task of the spiritual scientist, however, to test all the more carefully what it is that convinces people so unshakably — just because it appears to them to be entirely logical and thus they are convinced of it. What, for instance — they think — could be a better definition than this, when someone is asked, in this modern materialistic Age of ours "What is a true concept?"

— that he answers by saying: — “It is a true concept, when I form an inner picture of an object which is actually present, outside in the world. This is then a true picture of an object which exists outside.” In other words, everyone, in our day, would give this definition: “Truth consists in the conformity of a picture which we form in thought, to something actually existing outside.” We can now very easily show, however, if we examine concepts, that true concept has nothing to do with what we usually call by this name — has nothing whatever to do with it, in so far as it is supposed to be a picture of something having actual existence. It can easily be shown that actual existence goes along quite another path than does the picture which we fancy to be concept. You see, if this were true: that a concept is only true when it conforms with something having actual existence, naturally, then, it would also be true only so long as that which has actual existence verifies it.

Thus a concept might be compared with a portrait which someone has made of a human being. The portrait is good, if it resembles the person in question. Yet it has nothing to do with his being. The fact that the picture corresponds to the person, does not lead to an inner truth in the picture. Imagine to yourself that you have painted the picture of some man who then dies, soon afterwards. At first, the picture corresponded to what was there, but afterwards to what no longer exists. There is no connection between actual existence or life, and the portrait; as far as life is concerned, it is an entirely indifferent matter whether the picture is a true one or not. Such a connection is quite imaginary, when we look at things really logically. The essential thing is to experience things inwardly. It is this inner experience which humanity must again acquire.

In order to acquire this, however — and it is just during these hard, sorrowful days that we can be brought to realise in a special measure how necessary this is — in order to acquire this, it is necessary above all that humanity should acquire again a feeling for Truth, for real Truth.

Materialism gradually estranges us completely from Truth. We have gone astray through materialism — and especially where the idea of Truth is concerned. Compare for yourselves, for instance, the journalistic descriptions of today — and how many people read nothing but the newspapers, nowadays — compare these with the real events, which you may happen to have seen yourself! When you read this again, in the newspapers, you will find that the reporter has written it up in the way that he believes will make an *impression* on his readers. All feeling that such descriptions should correspond to the Truth grows weaker and weaker. **And so long as this feeling for Truth does not permeate humanity, the impulse that leads from the sense-world into the spiritual world cannot be awakened to activity in human souls. For, with this want of any concepts of Truth in our thoughts, our concepts become falsified.** How often, for instance, do we come across the following case:

Someone writes about Spiritual Science — let us suppose about what I have published in connection with Spiritual Science. He writes about this, and he cannot help saying — owing to his materialistic mentality — that everything is invented, and that it is not permissible to invent such things. And then he continues by investigating the question of how it can be possible for a man to be so fantastic.

As a matter of fact, this article actually appeared not so very long ago. The writer tries to find out how it is possible that a man can be so fantastic! And then he relates *where* this man comes from — in this case, it was I — where he used to live (not his recent abode, but where the writer reports him to have lived) and how it is because of his peculiar race-mixture that he can invent such fantastic things. And then this reporter himself invents the most incredible things, impelled by his materialistic mentality. And here you have an example of what I mean: People simply take hold of lies, and allow truth to become inwardly distorted.

Of course, no direct proof can be supplied for this. Yet what could be more false than to accuse someone of inventing fantastic things, and then to invent the most incredibly fantastic things about him, oneself! If you will study our modern life carefully, you will find that there is **a very widespread lack of any feeling of responsibility, which would see to it that everything one says should correspond to the Reality. Unless we possess this feeling for Truth most intensively, we cannot gain access to the spiritual world. Nor can we**

understand why we must believe to be true, what Spiritual Science brings down for us as Truth, from the spiritual world.

But our thinking is far too inadequate for a true contemplation of this sort — and we cling too much to our own personal interests, to be able to see how untruthfulness glitters in everything and how its fragments can be found in all the happenings of life.

A true feeling, a true conception of this is what should occupy our thoughts, and should constitute the first preparatory steps in Spiritual Science. *THOUGHTS LIKE THESE SHOULD BE, I might say, A KIND OF CONSCIOUS PREPARATION FOR WHAT MAN'S FUTURE REALLY SHOULD BE. FOR, THE WELFARE OF THE HUMAN RACE CAN BECOME A REALITY ONLY IF OUR SOULS BECOME UNITED AGAIN WITH THE SPIRIT.* Spiritual Science is not something that we seek in the form of a new kind of sensation, but something whereof we know that it *must* arise, because humanity needs it. And we ought to feel indebted, as it were, to Spiritual Science, if we observe, in a clear and lucid way the course of human evolution.

How much richer we grow, through what Spiritual Science can give us, because the world widens out for us more and more, through the fact that spiritual reality is added to physical reality, in human evolution! Human beings have been more and more cut off, in this materialistic age, from the world in which man lives between death and a new birth. Spiritual Science must give back to them, again, that life which comprises the whole human being — including that part which remains when man no longer possesses a physical body. In this respect, the physical world has nothing to give us.

It can weigh heavily, very heavily, upon our souls — especially just at the present difficult time — to see a volume like the one by Ernst Haeckel, which has just appeared. He calls it “Thoughts of Eternity”. Now, Ernst Haeckel is one of the most distinguished men of our day. This book, “Thoughts of Eternity”, starts out with the present Great War. What is the chief content of this book? The chief content of this newest book by Haeckel, “Thoughts of Eternity”, is expressed in these words: What can this particular war teach us? Thousands and thousands of people die a death of external violence, without any necessity whatsoever. “Must we not see” — asks Haeckel — “in this very war, the proof for the fact that all thoughts on eternity and infinity are absurd? Does not this same war, which ruins men's lives through outer chance, such as a bullet, for example — does it not show us that there is nothing beyond ordinary physical life?”

Of course, there will be other people of our day, who will be led to a different kind of thinking about eternity, through these events — to quite the opposite kind of thoughts of eternity, to thoughts which, in any case, call up in us the feeling that those who pass through the portal of death in times such as these continue their tasks for humanity in other worlds, and that the very sacrifice which they make, partly constitutes, in their new life, the starting point for what they have to fulfil when they no longer carry a physical body.

It is possible to prove all sorts of things, through ordinary science: it is possible to prove, for instance, that ordinary science enables man to construct all sorts of excellent kinds of apparatus, which raise the standard of human life and advance human civilisation — in a peaceful sense. Yet this same science can also construct the most terrible things — for the destruction of human life. External science enables man to construct both good and destructive things, and to prove all sorts of facts.

In order really to penetrate into the world where the eternal lives, there is need for Spiritual Science. And this Spiritual Science — I have already spoken to you about this, at least to some of you — shows us, among other things, and makes it quite clear to us, that those who leave their physical body at an early age, before the ordinary span of life on the physical plane has elapsed, give over their etheric body to the etheric world, and continue to live as individualities. Then, the spirit and the sense of Spiritual Science show us that such an etheric body, which would still have been able to support a physical body for a long time, still contains vital forces, when it is handed over to the etheric world — forces which would have been able to keep the physical body alive for decades. It exists in the etheric world, as illustrated by the example I have already cited to you.

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What a human being acquires, through his sacrificial death continues to live in his individuality. It continues to live in him, especially at a time like the present; and we are able to gain an insight into the significance of what is taking place only when we look at things with our spiritual eyes, through Spiritual Science. Then our attention will be drawn to the fact that the spiritual counterpart of what is now happening on European soil, as the spiritual correlation, the spiritual parallel process of the mighty and sorrowful events taking place on the physical plane, here in Europe — since all physical events are under the guidance of the spiritual world — must flow through physical events, into the future of human evolution.

But this will bear fruit only if human souls, living in physical bodies on the earth, acquire a consciousness of the fact that an active and helping influence is going out to them — from those forces which live in the spiritual world as the result of thousands and thousands of sacrificial deaths: and that they can submit themselves to this influence, in a sense, in order to be able to continue in the future their activity on this earth — united with the dead through that consciousness of the reality of a spiritual world, which can be acquired by the human soul.

This is what Spiritual Science must give to men — also in connection with these events now taking place. And human beings will then be able to render fruitful for the future, in the right way, the spiritual counterpart of this mightiest of all world-events, and they will be able also to think and to feel, in the right way.

From the courage of fighters,
from the blood of battles,
from the sorrow of those who are left behind,
from a nation's sacrifice,
will ripen spiritual fruit —
if, toward the spirit-kingdom,
souls will spirit-conscious turn.