

Spirit

Spirit (Latin: *spiritus*; Greek: πνεῦμα *pneuma* or νοῦς *nous*; German: **Geist**, from Indo-European: *gheis-, "to be excited, upset, shudder") is the source of all creative activity. Its basic activity consists in constantly creating itself anew out of itself as spirit, as it is symbolically indicated for instance by the image of the bird phoenix. Therefore, one can only speak of real, i.e. actually acting spirit, insofar as it is directly active in reality (in the broadest sense) creating and shaping. What is called "mind" in English and is equated mostly wrongly with the spirit, is only its powerless, brain-bound unreal mental mirror image. The brain itself, however, is - like the whole human organism - a product of the spirit.

The creative power of the spirit

„The spirit is activity, is always activity. The spirit is creative. The mind is the absolutely productive. The intellect is the passive image of the spirit.“ (Lit.:GA 305, p. 29)

The spirit never has a completed, finished being, but is in an eternal becoming. Out of the overflowing of this self-creative activity the outer creation arises step by step in the form of spiritual, ethereal and finally also physical beings and formations.

„What do we actually attribute to the spirit when we speak of spirit? We attribute to it as reality, as external reality, that which we experience, so to speak, in ourselves in our intelligence. As it enters into a temporal existence in us, as it were, and appears creatively, we form a concept of intelligence, of rational experience, of rational creation, and look at the universe around us. We would have to be very short-sighted if we wanted to attribute intelligence, everything we call spirit, only to ourselves. But if we look out and see that the things of space and time express themselves in such a way that our intelligence can embrace the lawfulness, then we say: What lives in us as intelligence is spread out in space and time and works there in space and time. When we look around us in the vast, dead kingdom of nature, we speak of the fact that the spirit in this vast, dead kingdom of nature is, as it were, congealed in the substance, and that we can let in, catch in our intelligence that which expresses itself in the forms, in the lawful effectiveness of the substance, and thereby have in our intelligence a kind of reflection of the spirit that weaves and works through the world.“ (Lit.:GA 60, p. 73f)

„All the extraction of the spiritual from things and entities would be pure phantasm, would be a self-made phantasm, if one would not presuppose that everywhere where we look and from which we can draw the spirit, this spirit is also present. Now one may say that - even if only in small circles - this general presupposition of the spiritual content of the world is nevertheless already made in many cases. But even among those who speak of the spirit in things, it remains as a rule to speak, so to speak, of this spirit in general, that is, to speak of the fact that all mineral, vegetable, animal and so on is based on spiritual weaving, spiritual life. But to go into the way in which the spirit specializes itself to us, how it lives itself out in particular in these or those forms of existence, one does not yet think of this in the widest circles of our present education. Basically, one quite resents those who speak not only of the spirit in general, but who speak of the special forms, the special kinds of the spirit, how it asserts itself behind this or that appearance. Nevertheless, on the ground of our spiritual science, we must



Phoenix, detail from Aberdeen Bestiary, 12th-century

speak of the spirit not only in such a vague, general way as is now indicated, but in such a way that we recognize: how does the spirit weave behind mineral or vegetable existence, as in animal and human existence?“ (S. 157f)

The spirit of the human being is his imperishable spiritual core, his individual I. Through this he is self-creative active. This is experienced very strongly at the moment of death and it is precisely on this that the I-consciousness after death ignites.

„To his birth the physical man does not look back in the physical world, to death he looks back in the whole time between death and a new birth. This looking back, this meeting with the experience of death, that is what generates the I-consciousness between death and a new birth, that is what we owe it to.

The sight of death is only from the side of the physical experience seen, if at all, something terrible. Only there it has horror and terror, if one sees it from this side. But the dead sees him from the other side. And seen from this side, the knowledge has really nothing terrible, that so to speak the moment of death is permanent for the whole life between death and new birth. For even if it is annihilation, seen from this physical side of life, it is the most glorious, the greatest, the most beautiful, the most sublime thing that can be seen perpetually from the other side of life. There it continually testifies to the victory of spirit over matter, to the self-creative life-force of spirit. In this sensing of the self-creative life-force of the spirit the I-consciousness is present in the spiritual worlds.

In the spiritual worlds, therefore, one has this I-consciousness precisely by the fact that one continually generates oneself inwardly, that one never appeals to an existing being, but always generates oneself, and in this self-generating one touches oneself, as it were, backward toward the moment when death has occurred. So we can also indicate in what way the I-consciousness, the self-consciousness is generated in the time between death and new birth.“ (Lit.:GA 174b, p. 99f)

In a broader sense, the human spirit also refers to those higher essential members which are formed by the conscious spiritual work of man on his lower members and which so inwardly fill the I that they become an inalienable part of man's spiritual individuality. Rudolf Steiner has called these purely spiritual members of the human being spirit self, life spirit and spirit man. Through the spirit self he is creatively active in his astral body, through the life spirit in the etheric body and through the spirit man even in the physical body.

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