

The Story of My Life

GA 28

Chapter XXXIII

My first work of lecturing within the circles which grew out of the Theosophical Movement had to be planned according to the temper of mind of the groups. Theosophical literature had been read there, and people were used to certain forms of expression. I had to retain these if I wished to be understood.

But with the lapse of time and the progress of the work I was able gradually to pursue my own course, even in the forms of expression used.

For this reason, in the reports of lectures belonging to the first years of the anthroposophical activity, there is spread before one a true inner and spiritual picture of the path by which I moved in order to extend the knowledge of the spirit, stage by stage, so that from what lay close at hand the remote might be grasped; but one must also take this path truly according to its inwardness.

The years, approximately, from 1901 to 1907 or 1908 were a time in which I stood with all the forces of my soul under the impression of the facts and Beings of the spiritual world coming close to me. Out of the experience of the spiritual world in general there grew the special sorts of knowledge. One experiences very much while composing such a book as *Theosophy*. At every step my endeavour was to remain always in touch with scientific knowledge. With the expansion and deepening of spiritual experience, this endeavour after such a contact takes on special forms. My *Theosophy* seems to fall into an entirely different tone at the moment when I pass from the description of the human being to a setting forth of the “Soul-World” and the “Spirit-Land.”

While describing the human being I proceed from the results of physical science. I seek so to deepen anthropology that the human organism may appear in its differentiation. Then one can see in this how, according to its several kinds of organization, it is in different ways bound up with that penetrating it from the beings of the spheres of soul and spirit. One finds the vital activity in one form of organization; then the point of action of the etheric body becomes visible. One finds the organs of feeling (*Empfindung*) and of perception (*Wahrnehmung*); then the as-

tral body is indicated through the physical organization. Before my spiritual perception there stood spiritually these members of man's being: etheric body, astral body, ego, etc. In setting these forth I sought to connect them with the results of physical science. Very difficult for one who wishes to remain scientific is the setting forth of the repeated earthly lives and of the destinies which are thereby determined. If one does not wish at this point to speak merely from spiritual perception, one must resort to ideas which result, to be sure, from a fine observation of the sense world, but which men fail to grasp. To such a finer manner of observation man shows himself to be, in organization and evolution, different from the animal kingdom. And if one observes this difference, life itself gives rise to the idea of repeated earthly lives; but people do not actually observe this. So such ideas seem not to be taken from life but to be conceived arbitrarily or simply taken out of more ancient world-conceptions.

I faced these difficulties in full consciousness. I battled with them. And anyone who will take the trouble to review the successive editions of my *Theosophy* and see how I recast again and again the chapter on repeated earthly lives, for the very purpose of attaching the truths of this to those ideas which are taken from observation of the sense-world, will find what pains I took to adjust myself rightly to the recognized scientific methods.

Even more difficult from this point of view were the chapters on the "Soul-World" and the "Spirit-Land." To one who has read the preceding discussions only to take cognizance of the content, the truths set forth in these chapters will seem to be mere assertions arbitrarily uttered. But it is different for one whose experience of ideas has received an access of strength from the reading of that which is linked up with the observation of the sense-world. To him the ideas have released themselves from their bondage to sense and have taken on an independent inner life. Now, therefore, the succeeding process of soul can become an inner possession. He becomes aware of the life of released ideas. These weave and work in his soul. He experiences them as he experiences through the senses colours, tones, and sensations of warmth. And as the world of nature is given in colours, tones, etc., so is the world of spirit given to him in the experienced ideas. Of course, any one who reads the first discussions of my *Theosophy* without the impression of inner experience, so that he does not become aware of a metamorphosis of his previous ideal experience, – whoever, in spite of having read the preceding, goes on to the succeeding discussions as if he had begun to read the book at the chapter "The Soul-World" – such a person must inevitably reject it. To him the truths appear to be assertions set up without proof. But an anthroposophic book is designed to be taken up in inner experience. Then by stages a form of understanding comes about. This may be very weak. But it may – and should – be there. The further deepening confirmation through exercises described in *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment* is simply a deepening confirmation. For progress on the spiritual road this is necessary; but a rightly understood anthroposophic book

should be an *awakener* of the spiritual experience in the reader, not a certain quantity of information imparted. The reading of it should not be a mere reading; it should be an experiencing with inner commotions, tensions, and releasings.

I am aware how far removed is that which I have given in books from sufficing by its own forces to bring about such an experience in the mind of the reader. But I know also that in every page my inner endeavour has been to reach the utmost possible in this direction. I do not, as regards style, so describe that my subjective feelings can be detected in the sentences. In writing, I subdue to a dry, mathematical style what has come from warm and profound experience. But only such a style can be an awakener; for the reader must cause warmth and experience to awaken in himself. He cannot simply allow these to flow into him from the one setting forth the truth, while the clarity of his own mind remains obscured.

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