

# The Cycle of the Year

GA 223



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GA 223

by

*Rudolf Steiner*

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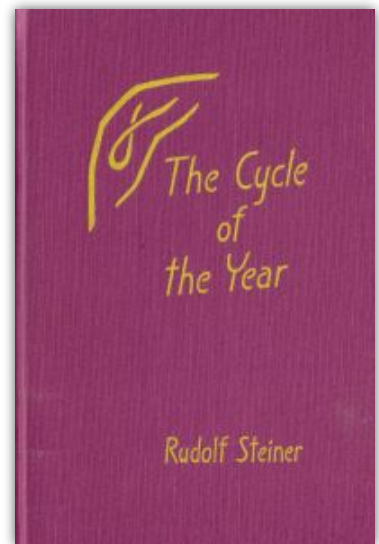
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## Preface

These lectures focus on the four Christian festival seasons, elaborating on the complementary nature of Christmas with Midsummer and Easter with Michaelmas. The esoteric realities behind the festivals are discussed in relation to sub-earthly and super-earthly powers, the equinoxes, the ancient Mysteries, Michael's activity, morality, and the musical-poetic and visual arts. This volume along with *Michaelmas and the Soul-Forces of Man* completes the entire German volume GA 223.

In the collected edition of Rudolf Steiner's works, the volume containing the German texts is entitled *Der Jahreskreislauf als Atmungsvorgang der Erde und die vier grossen Festeszeiten*. (Vol. 223 in the Bibliographic Survey). They were translated from the German by Barbara D. Betteridge and Frances E. Dawson. Cover Design by Peter Stebbing.



## Translator's Note

My mother, Frances E. Dawson (1872 – 1961) left to me her translation of this cycle, made thirty to forty years ago. In preparing this edition, I have referred to her copy so extensively that I wanted to name her as co-translator. We have been compatible colleagues in sharing the view that Rudolf Steiner's unique style of speaking is better served by keeping the translation as fresh and pictorial as may be, rather than clothing it in Latin terms and perhaps more literary turns of phrase. We hope this effort will help the reader to picture the time and place and even the audience of members gathered together to share what Dr. Gunther Wachsmuth described as "these sacred hours which carried the inauguration of the spiritual cult of the festival times at the Goetheanum to a new stage of development."

It should become clear to the reader as he reads that I have employed the unusual usage of capitalizing "Earth" and "Nature" — and even of referring to them now and then as feminine — because they are so clearly personified in the text. Keeping the remarkable repetitiveness of the closing lectures perhaps also requires apology, in the primary sense of the word. Rudolf Steiner's every word and deed was so intensely conscious that it is safe to assume that even such repetitiousness had its reason (beyond someone coughing in the audience!). Rather than inflicting my view on him, I will leave the reader to wonder — and perhaps to discover — the reason.

Barbara Betteridge  
Santa Paula, California



## Foreword

Man was born out of the Light into darkness, and the longing lies in him like a seed to seek the Light again. This ideal has shone before mankind, now brightly, now dimly, through all the ages of human culture on Earth. We glimpse it in the most direct form in the apparent preoccupation of earlier cultures with the Sun, whether this was seen as a divinity or observed in its outer reflection in the Earth's seasonal relationships to it.

On the one hand we have the Zarathustrians' Ahura-Mazdao and the Egyptians' Ra, on the other hand, holy places such as the laboriously constructed Stonehenge or the Mayan monument at Chichen Itza, both of which were apparently used in seasonal ceremonies reminding the people through the wonder of the solstice or the equinox of humanity's age-old connection with the creating God or gods, who fashioned both Earth and man and established the rhythms of Sun, Moon and stars on which all life depends.

Modern times find us in this respect in a darkened period. Walls of dogma enclose us, as the dogmas of science are added to the dogmas of religion. Many people, for example, embrace either evolutionism on the one hand or creationism on the other, on blind faith, without knowing very much about either. Yet dissatisfaction, a never fully suppressed longing really to *know*, stirs many others.

Readers who pick up yet another book by Rudolf Steiner are likely to do so because they have come to feel that here was a man who really knew, through a remarkable development of powers of cognition (which he claimed are accessible to everyone), the answers to many of the riddles that perplex every thinking person. Those who are familiar with Steiner's view of the world, of man and his evolution, through previous study of his teachings, known as Anthroposophy, should have little trouble with this volume.

But anyone who picks up *The Cycle of the Year* lacking prior acquaintance with Steiner may feel as if he had been dropped into a foreign country without map or dictionary. For this book is one of the many volumes which are not self-explaining written works, but rather a series of lectures given to a particular audience, in this case members of the Anthroposophical Society, who had been following and even diligently studying Steiner's unique work, many of them for as much as a decade or two.

Such a new reader needs to be told first of all that there are books both by Steiner himself and by other authors whose aim is to serve as an introduction to Anthroposophy. *An Occult Science* by Steiner is one such book. In *Occult Science* Steiner pictured in a great tableau the interweaving evolution of man and cosmos, from the first condition of spiritual primal warmth to "the turning point of time" when

the Christ/Logos accomplished the Resurrection and laid into the Earth the seed for future human redemption. This mighty tableau of occult history had never been set forth in this way until Steiner described it here. *The Philosophy of Freedom* is an introductory work of a different character. In it, even more than in his other books, it was not Rudolf Steiner's primary intention to provide the reader with a fresh store of information. Rather, the intention was to set forth a systematic path by which the reader can develop and activate forces of thinking which he can begin to use livingly, creatively, imaginatively, warmly, freely, rather than in the passive, stereotyped, dry manner which present-day education so generally fosters.

From these few words the reader will already expect to find that Anthroposophy is connected with Christianity. It is not in itself a religion, much less a sect, but may be described, rather, as a Western Christian esoteric path. The Christianity Steiner set forth will be seen to be universal, rather than exclusive. We might picture it as a great life-giving river into which have flowed in their time the contributions of all the earlier great religions. These include not only the familiar ones, such as Buddhism and Judaism, but religions minimally known to history, such as that of the Druids, the Mithra cult and so on. Steiner, who could reconstruct also these through his clairvoyant vision, often referred to them together as "the ancient Mysteries." He speaks of them here, especially in the final two lectures of this volume.

This latter aspect of the book might seem to be of merely academic interest unless we know of Rudolf Steiner's elaboration of the concept of reincarnation, with which those who heard the lectures were of course familiar. These listeners would have seen Steiner's revelations, for instance of the experiences of the festivals of the seasons as conducted by representatives of the Mysteries, as revelations of their own roots, as events in which they themselves might very well have participated in earlier incarnations. For in Steiner's view, we all take part in turn in each succeeding stage of human history.

In ancient times among those cultures that carried the torch of civilization, as described by Steiner, spiritual authority rested in the Mysteries. The science, the art, and the religion of those cultures were wholly consonant with one another and flowed as a unity out of each individual Mystery. There was no split between evolutionists creationists! It is known that Egyptian pharaohs, for example, were at the same time priests and initiates in the Mystery temple. Certain men — and until later only men — were chosen as candidates and were then trained to become initiates. The spiritual world was opened to them and they became witnesses of this world. They then passed on appropriate parts of the wisdom teaching to the rest of the populace in the form of myths, as well as giving guidance for the affairs of outer life, while keeping the deeper secrets strictly for themselves. Plato and Pythagoras among the ancient Greeks had knowledge of these Mysteries. The later Christian Mysteries, including those of the Holy Grail, cherished remnants of the ancient wisdom, but the great Spirit of the Sun, who had been variously known as Vishva, Karman, Ahura-Mazdao, Osiris and so on was now recognized to be none other than the Christ/Logos Who had come to Earth.

These aspects of history Steiner was able to set forth out of his own spiritual research. (This in no way implies that he stood alone in having knowledge of these things). But what did he say of our own times?

Now that mankind has come of age and man is able to think for himself, Rudolf Steiner asserted that the divine powers have turned over the responsibility for Earth's further evolution to man himself, as was always their intention. The "gods" have set "man" free — and woman now stand beside man and are of course included in the general term "man." To go into the future, we who are "man" need to reconcile once more science, art, and religion, which are now pulling in conflicting directions. To make this possible, Mystery wisdom will have to be brought into the open, made accessible to all men, no longer reserved for the privileged few. Mozart had a sense for this. In his opera "The Magic Flute," he revealed, although still in allegorical form, some aspects of the temple Mysteries, notably the trials undergone by a candidate for initiation. Indeed Mozart is said to have seriously offended thereby those who still zealously guarded the Mysteries in his day.

The same was of course said of Steiner in his time. In Rudolf Steiner (1861 – 1925) we see a fully modern Western initiate. First having become educated as a natural scientist, he took upon himself the dual task of revealing as much of the Mystery wisdom as he could find individuals capable of receiving, and also of pointing to a modern path of spiritual development which can further open up the sources of wisdom. One of his written books in particular addresses itself to this task, setting forth a path of self-development which can lead to initiation, a path which anyone by his own free choice may follow. This is *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and its Attainment*.

It was Rudolf Steiner's destiny to become active as initiate and teacher just at the time when a new page was being turned in spiritual history in the relation of man to those heavenly beings whose impulses come to light in the progression of time. In the last third of the nineteenth century, the archangel Michael became the ruling Time Spirit, just before the Dark Age, or Kali Yuga as it was known to the ancients, was to come to an end, in 1899. From the beginning it had been Michael's task to hold in check the Powers of Darkness, whose leader Steiner designates as Ahriman (Persian: Angri-Manyu). We often see Michael depicted in medieval art as the courageous slayer of the Dragon. It was Steiner's teaching that now that mankind is of age and free, man must overthrow the "Dragon" himself, first of all by recognizing him where he works, but that Michael will lend man power. Working out of Anthroposophy, Rudolf Steiner served as a human representative of Michael, who is mentioned without introduction already in the first lecture in this volume.

Sixty years after Steiner's passing, Anthroposophy is increasingly showing how this modern Mystery impulse can fructify not only the inner but also the outer life, just as did the Mysteries of old. Most readers will have heard of the worldwide Waldorf School movement which arises out of Anthroposophy. Many will have heard of the organic but functional style of architecture Steiner inaugurated with his Goetheanum buildings in Dornach, Switzerland or of the eurythmy or drama performances which



take place there; of Bio-Dynamic agriculture, anthroposophical medicine, or another of the many offspring of this science of the spirit. All this is of course only a beginning. The threefold social order, for example, referred to in the volume in hand, has yet to be implemented, with all that it promises for the welfare of mankind. But a beginning has been made which finds the sciences, the arts, and religion starting to flow once more from a single source.

That a spiritual science must develop out of today's natural science, and that the threefold nature of man as a being of spirit, soul, and body must be grasped as a starting point, these are overall concerns of this volume, as of many others of Steiner's works. Its specific approach, however, is unique to this work. Only here, in this cycle of lectures, do we find so fully revealed the deeper relationships of man to the Earth's seasons, to the time of the solstices and the equinoxes, to the festivals of the seasons, and through them to the Christ Being and His right-hand spirit, Michael.

Here we can begin to sense again, surely with awe, the oneness of man with the universe that stirred the hearts of the ancients, our ancestors, of our earlier selves if you will. Here we find a foundation laid for celebrating the Christian festivals, especially Easter and Michaelmas, in a newly conscious way in which through man's emerging capacities, the lost communion with the divine world of man's origin can be re-established in ways suitable to the new Age of light. We are indeed reminded of Mozart's hope-filled declaration at the end of his opera: "The Powers of Darkness give way to the Light."

Barbara Betteridge  
Santa Paula, 1984



31 March 1923, Dornach

At the times when the great festivals of the year approach our souls, it is good ever and again to bring before our inner eye, out of spiritual cosmic connections, the meaning of the festival year. And I should like to do this by setting before you how, under the influence of spiritual insights and over long ages, the festival year has gradually evolved out of the whole constitution of the Earth. If we look at the Earth and its events from such an aspect, we must only make clear that we cannot conceive the Earth as a mere conglomeration of minerals and rocks, as is done by modern mineralogy and geology, but we must rather regard it as a living, ensouled organism, which brings forth the plants, the animals and the physical being of man out of its own inner forces. Then what I shall now set forth will be in agreement.

You know that the Earth, with all the beings belonging to it — consider only the plant covering of the Earth — completely changes its aspect in the course of the year, changes everything with which it looks out into cosmic space as with its physiognomy, so to speak. After a year the Earth has always arrived again at about the same point, as to its appearance, at which it stood a year before. You need only to think how almost everything related to weather conditions, to the budding of plants, to the appearance of animal creatures — how with regard to all this the Earth has arrived again in this March, 1923, at about the same point of development at which it stood in March of the year 1922.

Today we intend to consider this cycle of the Earth as a kind of mighty breathing which the Earth carries out in relation to the surrounding cosmos. We can consider still other processes which take place on the Earth and around it as breathing processes of a sort. We can even speak of a *daily* breathing of the Earth. But today we want to place before our inner eye the yearly cycle, in the large, as a mighty breathing process of the Earth, in which of course it is not air that is breathed in and out, but rather those forces which are at work for example in vegetation, those forces which push the plants out of the Earth in spring, and which withdraw again into the Earth in fall, letting the green plants fade and finally paralyzing plant growth.

To repeat, it is not a breathing of air of which we speak, but the in-and-out-breathing of *forces*, of which we can get a partial idea if we notice the plant-growth during the course of the year. We intend today to bring this annual breathing process of the Earth before our souls.

Let us first look at the Earth at the time of the winter solstice, in the last third of December, according to our present reckoning. At this time we may compare the Earth's breathing with the lung-breathing of a man when he has inhaled a breath of

air and is working on it in himself, that is, when he is holding his breath within him. In the same way, the Earth has within it those forces which I spoke of as being inhaled and exhaled. At the end of December it is holding these forces. And what is happening then with the Earth I can sketch for you schematically in the following way:



Figure 1

Let us think of this (*red*) as representing the Earth. We can of course only consider one part of the Earth in connection with this breathing. We shall consider that part in which we ourselves dwell; the conditions are of course reversed on the opposite side of the Earth. We must picture (*vorstellen*) the breathing of the Earth in such a way that in one region there is out-breathing, and in the opposite region in-breathing; but this we need not consider today.

Let us picture in our minds the season of December. Let us imagine what I am drawing here in yellow to be the held breath in our region. At the end of December the Earth has fully in-breathed and is holding in herself the forces of which I just spoke. She has entirely sucked in her soul element, for the forces of which I have spoken are the soul element of the Earth. She has drawn it completely in, just as a man who has inhaled holds the air entirely in himself.

This is the time at which with good reason the birth of Jesus has been set, because Jesus is thus born out of an Earth force which contains the entire soul element of the Earth within it. At the time of the Mystery of Golgotha the initiates who were still worthy of the ancient initiation connected a deep meaning with the view which placed the birth of Jesus just at this point of the earthly in-breathing and holding of the breath.

These initiates said something like the following: "In the ancient days, when our places of initiation stood within the Chaldean and Egyptian cultures, when a wish arose to know what that Being who represents the lofty Sun-Being had to say to earthly humanity, an idea of his message was formed, not by looking at the sunlight directly in all its spirituality, but rather by observing the way in which the sunlight was rayed back from the Moon." And when the gaze was turned toward the Moon, they saw — with the help of clairvoyant vision — along with the flooding moonlight the manifestation of the Spirit of the Universe. And the meaning of this manifestation was realized in a more external way when they regarded the constellation of the Moon in relation to the planets and fixed stars.

In this way the position of the stars, especially in relation to the down-streaming moonlight, was observed during the night hours in the Chaldean, and still more in the Egyptian mysteries. Just as a man now reads the meaning of letters on a sheet of paper, in those times meaning was read in the relation of Aries, or of Taurus, of Venus, or of the Sun itself, to the streaming moonlight. From the way in which the constellations and the stars stood in relation to one another, especially from the way they were oriented with the moonlight, there was read what the heavens had to say to the Earth. All this was put into words. And according to the meaning of what was thus put into words, the ancient initiates sought what that Being Who was later called the Christ had to say to earthly man. They sought to interpret what was conveyed by the stars in their relation to the Moon and apply it to the earthly life.

But now as the Mystery of Golgotha drew near, the whole nature of the Mysteries passed through what I might call a great soul-spiritual metamorphosis. Then the oldest of the initiates said to their pupils: "A time is at hand when the stellar constellations must no longer be related to the flooding moonlight. The universe will speak differently to earthly man in the future. The light of the Sun must be observed directly. The spiritual gaze of the knower must be turned away from the revelations of the Moon and toward the revelations of the Sun."

The teachings given in the Mysteries made a profound impression upon those men who at the time of the Mystery of Golgotha still ranked as initiates of the old order. And it was from this point of view that these initiates formed their judgment of the Mystery of Golgotha. But at the same time they said, "Some Earth event must enter in, which can bring about this transition from a lunar to a solar orientation." — It was in this way that the cosmic significance of the birth of Jesus dawned on them.

They saw the birth of Jesus as something which gave the impulse out of the very Earth itself, no longer to regard the Moon as the regent, so to speak, of celestial phenomena, but rather the Sun itself. — "The event that brings this about," so they said to themselves, "must be of an extraordinary kind." And the nature of this extraordinary event yielded its secret to them through the following: They began to understand the inner meaning of the Earth occurrence that took place in the last third of December, the occurrence which we now call Christmas. They said to themselves: "Everything must now be related to the Sun." — But the Sun can exert its power on the Earth only when the Earth has exhaled its forces. At Christmas time

it has breathed them in; its breath is being held. If Jesus is born at this time, He is born at a time when the Earth is in a certain way not speaking with the heavens, a time when the Earth with its being has entirely withdrawn into itself. Jesus is born, then, at a time when the Earth is rolling along through cosmic space quite alone, when it is not sending out its breath to be welled and woven through by the force of the Sun, by the light of the Sun. At this time the Earth has not offered its soul-being to the cosmos; it has withdrawn its soul being into itself, has sucked it in. Jesus is born on the Earth at a time when the Earth is alone with itself, is isolated as it were from the cosmos.

Try to feel for yourselves the cosmic perceiving-feeling (*Empfinden*) which lies at the basis of such a way of calculating!

Now let us follow the Earth further in its yearly course. Let us follow it up to the time in which we are just now, about the time of the spring equinox, the end of March. Then we shall have to picture the situation in this way:



Figure 2

The Earth (*red*) has just breathed out; the soul is still half within the Earth, but the Earth has breathed it out; the streaming soul-forces are pouring out into the cosmos. Whereas since December, the force of the Christ Impulse has been intimately bound up with the Earth, with the soul-element of the Earth, we find that now this Christ Impulse, together with the outward-streaming soul element, is beginning to radiate around the Earth (*arrows*). This which here as Christ-permeated Earth-soul is flowing out into spiritual cosmic space, must be met now by the force of the sunlight itself. And the mental picture arises: While in December the Christ withdrew the Earth-soul element into the interior of the Earth, in order to be

insulated from cosmic influences, now with the out-breathing of the Earth, He begins to let His forces breathe out, to extend them to receive the forces of the Sun (*das Sonnenhafte*) which radiate toward Him. And our schematic drawing will be correct if we represent the Sun force (*yellow*) as uniting with the Christ force radiating from the Earth. The Christ begins to work together with the Sun forces at Easter time; hence Easter falls at the time of the out-breathing of the Earth. But what happens then must not be related to the light flowing back from the Moon; it must be related to the Sun.

This is the origin of fixing the time of Easter as the first Sunday after the full moon following the spring equinox. And anyone who is sensitive to such things would have to say to himself with regard to the Easter time: "If I have united myself with the Christ force, my soul also streams out into cosmic spaces along with the out-breathing force of the Earth-soul, and receives the Sun force, which the Christ now brings to human souls from the *Earth*, whereas before the Mystery of Golgotha He brought it to them from the *cosmos*."

But here something else enters in. When festivals were established in those times in which whatever was important on Earth was referred to the flooding moonlight, it was done purely in accordance with what could be observed in space: how the Moon stood in relation to the stars. The intent of the Logos, which had been written into space by Him, was thus deciphered in order to determine the festivals. But if you consider the fixing of the Easter festival as we have it now, you will see that it has been established according to space only up to a certain point, that point at which we speak of the full moon after the beginning of spring. Thus far everything is spatial, but we depart from space when we refer to the *Sunday* after the spring full moon. This Sunday is determined, not spatially, but according to how it stands in the cycle of the year, how it stands in the cycle of the weekdays, where following Saturday come Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and again Saturday, always in periodical succession. We step out of space here, when we cross over from the spatial setting of the Moon constellation to the purely temporal course in the yearly cycle of Sundays.

Thus it was possible still in the old mysteries to perceive in feeling that the fixing of the festivals had formerly been related to cosmic space but that with the Mystery of Golgotha there was a progression out of cosmic space into time, which itself was no longer related to cosmic space. What related to the spirit was as it were torn away from the purely spatial. This was a powerful "jolt" of mankind toward the spirit.

If we carry further our view of the Earth's breathing process during the course of the year, we find the Earth in yet a third condition in June. At this place which we are observing, the Earth has completely exhaled. The entire soul-element of the Earth has been poured forth into cosmic space; it is yielded up to cosmic space and is saturating itself with the forces of the Sun and the stars. The Christ, Who is joined with this soul-element of the Earth, now unites His force also with the forces of the stars and the Sun, surging there in the Earth-soul that is given over to the cosmic All. It is St. John's Day — Mid-summer. The Earth has fully out-breathed. In her

outer physiognomy, with which she looks out into the universe, she reveals not her own inherent force, as she did at the time of the winter solstice; instead, the Earth reveals on her surface the reflected forces of the stars, of the Sun, of all that is in the cosmos outside her.

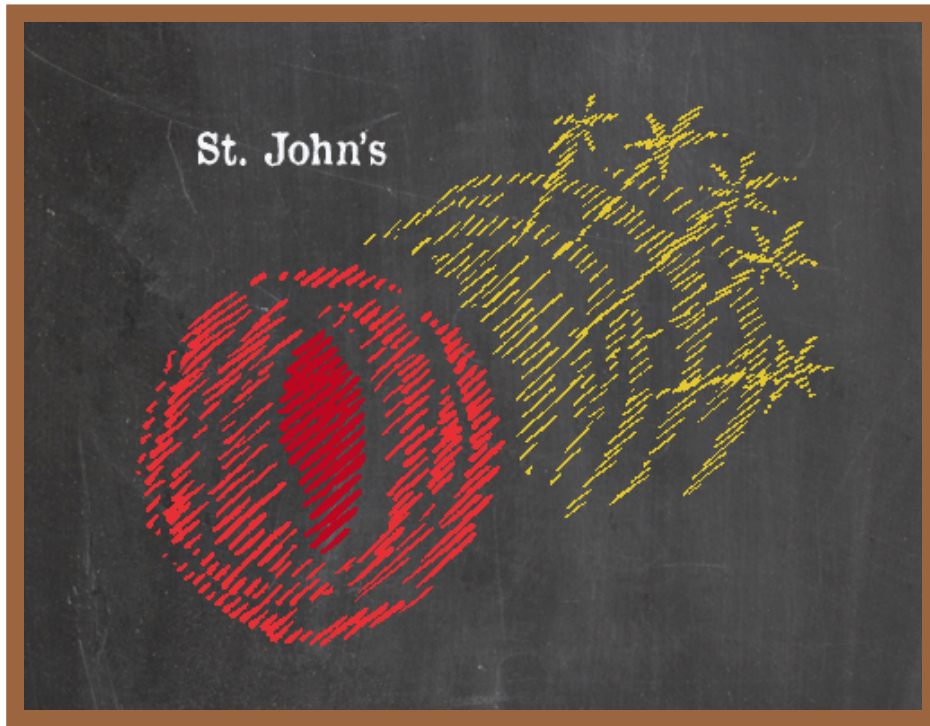


Figure 3

The old initiates, particularly those in the northern regions of Europe, felt most livingly the inner meaning and spirit of this time that is our June. At this time they felt their own souls, along with the Earth soul, given over to the cosmic expanses. They felt themselves to be living, not within the earthly realm, but rather in the cosmic distances. Indeed they said the following to themselves: "We live with our soul in the cosmic expanses. We live with the Sun, we live with the stars. And when we direct our gaze back upon the Earth, which has filled herself with springing and sprouting plants, which has brought forth animals of all kinds, then we see in the springing and sprouting plants, in the gleaming, unfolding colors of the flowers; we see in the insects flitting and creeping hither and yon, in the birds with their multicolored feathers traversing the air; we see gleam back from the Earth as though mirrored, what we take up into our souls just when we abandon the Earth and unite ourselves with the out-flowing breath of the Earth in order to live with the cosmos rather than with the Earth. What appears in world space springing and sprouting from the Earth in thousandfold colors — this is of the same nature. Only it is a reflection, a raying-back force, whereas we bear in our human souls the original force itself."

This was the feeling of those men who were inspired out of the Mystery places, those men who especially understood the festival of the summer solstice; and so we see the St. John's festival placed at the time of the Earth's great out-breathing into the cosmos.

If we follow this breathing-process still further we come finally to the stage that makes its entry at the end of September. The out-breathed forces begin their return movement; the Earth begins once more to inhale. The soul of the Earth which was poured out into the cosmos now draws back into the interior of the Earth again. Human souls perceive this in-breathing of the Earth-soul element, either in their subconscious or in their clairvoyant impressions, as processes of their own souls. Those men who were inspired by initiation knowledge of these things could say to themselves at the end of September: "What the cosmos has given us and what has united itself with our soul force through the Christ Impulse — this we now allow to flow back into the earthly realm, into that earthly sphere which throughout the summer has served only as a reflection, as a kind of mirror in relation to the extraterrestrial cosmos."



Figure 4

But a mirror has the property of not permitting anything that is in front of it to pass through it. Because the Earth is a mirror of the cosmos in the summer, it is also opaque in its inner nature, impermeable by cosmic influences and therefore, during the summer time, impermeable by the Christ Impulse. (*See drawing*). At this time the Christ Impulse has to live in the exhaled breath. The Ahrimanic forces, however, establish themselves firmly in this Earth which has become impervious to the Christ Impulse. And when the human being returns once more with the forces which he has taken up into his own soul through the Earth's out-breathing — including the forces of the Christ — he plunges into an Earth which has been ahrimanized.



However, it is so, that in the present cycle of Earth evolution — since the last third of the nineteenth century — from spiritual heights there comes to the aid of the descending human soul the force of Michael, who, while the Earth's breath is flowing back into the Earth itself, contends with the Dragon, Ahriman.

This was already foreseen prophetically by those in the ancient Mysteries who understood the course of the year spiritually. They knew that for their time the Mystery had not yet approached which would reveal Michael coming to the help of descending human souls. But they knew that when the souls should have been reborn again and again, this Michael force would enter, would come to the aid of earthly human souls. This was the meaning they saw in the cycle of the year.

Hence it is out of ancient wisdom that you will find written in the calendar on September 29, a few days after the fall equinox — Michael's Day, Michaelmas. And Michaelmas is for simple country people an exceedingly important time. But because of its position in the cycle of the year, Michaelmas is an important time also for those who want to grasp the whole significance of our present earth epoch. If we want to take our place in the present time with the right consciousness, we need to understand that in the last third of the nineteenth century the Michael force took up the struggle with the Dragon, with the Ahrimanic powers, in just the way necessitated by our time. And we must insert ourselves into this intention of earthly and human evolution by taking part in the right way with our own consciousness in this cosmic-spiritual battle.<sup>[1]</sup>

We may say that up until now Michaelmas has been a festival for peasants — you know the sense in which I use the word — a festival for simple folk. But once the significance of the yearly breathing process that takes place between the Earth and the cosmos is recognized, Michaelmas will be more and more called upon to form a very real supplement to Easter. For mankind, who will understand earthly life again also in a spiritual sense, will eventually have to think in this way.

While the summer out-breathing occurred, the Earth was ahrimanized. Woe if Jesus had been born into this ahrimanized Earth! Before the cycle is completed again and December approaches, which brings about the birth of the Christ Impulse in the ensouled Earth, the Earth must be purified by spiritual forces, from the Dragon, from the Ahrimanic forces. And the purifying force of Michael, which subdues the evil Ahrimanic forces, must unite itself, from September into December, with the in-flowing earth breath, so that the Christmas festival may approach in the right way, and the birth of the Christ Impulse take place in the right way, so that it will then mature up until the beginning of the out-breathing at Easter time.

We can therefore say: "At Christmas time the Earth has drawn its soul-element into itself, the Earth has taken its soul-being into itself in the great yearly respiration. In this Earth-soul element which has been drawn into the Earth, the Christ Impulse is born in the inwardness of the Earth. Toward spring it flows out into the cosmos with

the out-breathing of the Earth. It views the star world and enters into reciprocal action with it, but in such a way that its relation to the stars is no longer spatial, but temporal, so that the temporal is withdrawn from the spatial."

Easter is on the first Sunday after the spring full moon. Within the full out-going breath man rises up with his soul-being into the cosmic world, permeates and saturates himself with the quality of the stars, takes in the breath of the cosmos with his earthly breath, thus permeating himself with the Easter spirit, and by St. John's Day he is most strongly imbued with that with which he began to permeate himself at Easter. He must then return to the Earth, with the Earth soul and his own soul-being, but he depends upon Michael's standing by him, so that he may penetrate the earthly world in the right way after the Ahrimanic element has been overcome through the Michael forces.

And ever more and more, with the strength of the indrawn breath, does the soul-element of the Earth retire into the Earth itself, up to Christmas time. And today we celebrate Christmas time in the right way if we say to ourselves: "Michael has purified the Earth, so that the birth of the Christ Impulse can occur at Christmas time in the right way."

Then the out-flowing into the cosmos begins again. In this outflowing Christ takes Michael with Him, in order that Michael may again gather to him out of the cosmos those forces which he has used up in his struggle with the earthly Ahrimanic forces. At Easter time Michael begins again to immerse himself in the cosmic world, and is most strongly interwoven with the cosmos at St. John's time.

And a man in the present who comprehends in the right sense what unites him as man with the earthly, says to himself: "The age is beginning for us in which we see the Christ Impulse aright when we know that it is accompanied by the force of Michael in the course of the year; when we see the Christ flowing down into the earthly and rising up into the cosmos, accompanied by Michael, who at one time is contending within the earthly, at another gathering strength for the fight in the cosmic spaces." (*See lemniscate*)

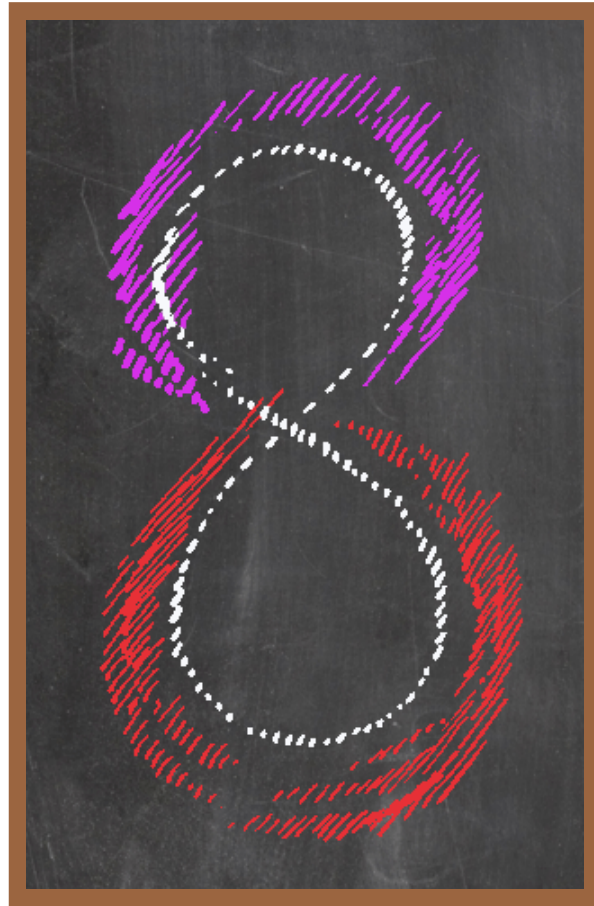


Figure 5

In the *Easter thought* we have an image of utmost grandeur which has been implanted into earth existence in order to bring enlightenment; namely, the image of Christ arising out of the grave in victory over Death. We can grasp this Easter thought in the right way in our time only if we understand that we must add to it today the Being of Michael, at the right hand of Christ Jesus. For while the force of the Earth's breath is becoming woven through with the force of Christ during the breathing process of the Earth in the course of the year's cycle, Michael accompanies Christ.

If we as Earth men would understand how to make the Christ thought alive in ourselves at each of the four great festivals of the year, including Easter, as indeed we must do, we need to be able to place this thought in the right way and in full consciousness into the *present* time. The hope that was focused on the coming of the Michael force in the service of the Christ force animated those who understand the Christ Impulse in the right way up to our time.

The obligation arises for us, especially in the modern age, to permeate ourselves with the Christ Impulse in the sense of the *Michael thought*. We do this in the right way when we know how to link the *Resurrection thought* with the active *Michael*

*thought* which has been implanted into human evolution, in the way I have often explained.



*1 April 1923, Dornach*

I have sought out of the esoteric aspect of the Easter thought to speak to you about how, when the course of Nature is permeated by spirit, it must come about that an autumn festival is added to the festivals of the year. This should be a kind of Michael festival, placed in relation to the fall equinox approximately in the same way as Christmas is to the winter solstice, Easter to the spring equinox, and St. John's to the summer solstice.

I should like to try to bring closer to you the Easter thought appropriate to the present age, particularly in its feeling content, so that tomorrow I can lay before you the whole significance of such a contemplation.

When we celebrate the Easter festival today, if we look about us into the consciousness of contemporary humanity and are honest with ourselves, we shall have to admit that the Easter thought is actually very little true for the greater part of humanity! On what does the truth of the Easter thought depend? The truth depends on a man's being able to link with this thought a mental image showing the Christ Being as having gone through death, having conquered Death, and then when He had undergone death and the succeeding Resurrection, having thereafter so united Himself with mankind that He could still give revelations to those who had formerly been His disciples, to the Apostles. But the Resurrection thought has more and more faded away, whereas when Christianity was in its inception it had been so living that Paul's words could sound across the ages from this epoch: "And if the Christ be not risen, then is... your faith vain!"

Paul has here linked Christianity directly with the Easter thought, that is with the thought of the Resurrection. People who have received the education of the present day call the Resurrection a miracle, and as miracle it is excluded from the realm of what is or can be reality. So that for all those who can no longer penetrate to the Resurrection thought, the Easter festival merely reflects an ancient custom, as do the rest of the Christian festivals. In the course of the years we have mentioned this from the most varied points of view.

It will first be necessary for mankind to reacquire a knowledge of the spiritual world as such in order to understand events which do not belong to the realm of sense reality; and what is connected with the Resurrection thought must be regarded as such an event. Then it will be possible for the Easter thought to become truly living again, which it cannot be for a humanity that relegates the Resurrection to the realm of unreal miracles.

The Easter thought arose in those epochs of mankind in which there were still remnants of the ancient primitive human knowledge of the spiritual world. We know that at the beginning of human earth-evolution, man had a certain instinctive clairvoyance by means of which he could gain glimpses of the spiritual world which led him to view this world as of equal validity with the physical sense world. This original instinctive clairvoyance is lost for earthly humanity. But in the first three centuries of the Christian era, the last remnants of it at least still existed. Hence in these centuries a certain understanding of the Easter thought based upon ancient human insight could still take root.

Such an understanding became blunted in the fourth century, when preparation began for what has come to full expression since the first third of the fifteenth century; namely, man's life in abstract, dead thoughts, which we have often mentioned. In these abstract, dead thoughts, in which natural science attains greatness, the Easter thought soon died. Today the time has come when it must again awaken as a living thought. But in order to awaken, it must pass over out of the state of death into a state of livingness.

That which is living is characterized by the fact that it puts forth something other than itself out of itself. In the early Christian centuries, when the Easter thought was spreading throughout Christendom, the "Gemuets" <sup>[2]</sup> of men were still sensitive enough to experience inwardly something very powerful when they pictured the grave of Christ and, rising out of the grave, that Being Who was now united with mankind. The Gemuets could experience with great inner force what appeared before their souls in this powerful image. And this inner experience was a *reality* in the human soul life.

Only that is a reality in the human soul life which this soul really lays hold of, just as the senses ordinarily lay hold of the outer sense world. The people of the early centuries felt that they were changed by beholding the event of the Death and the Resurrection of Christ. They felt that by this sight their souls were transformed, just as a man feels that he is changed by physical events in the course of his life on earth.

The human being is transformed at about the seventh year by the change of teeth, and again at about the fourteenth or fifteenth year by the onset of puberty. These are bodily transformations. In the contemplation of the Easter thought the early Christians felt themselves transformed in their inner soul life. They felt themselves thereby lifted out of one stage of human existence and transported into another.

In the course of time the Easter thought has lost this force, this power, and it can regain it only when the *Resurrection*, which cannot be understood according to natural laws, regains reality through spiritual science, a science which comprehends the spiritual. But what is spiritually conceived attains reality, not when this spiritual is conceived merely in abstract thoughts but only when it is also *grasped* in lively connection with the world appearing before the senses.

Anyone who wants to cling to the spiritual only in its abstraction, who says, for example, that we should not pull down the spiritual into the physical sense world, should at the same time maintain that the Divine Being is degraded when He is represented as having created the world. The Divine is comprehended in its greatness and power, not when we place it outside and beyond the sensible, but when we ascribe to it the power to work in this sensible world, to permeate this sensible world creatively. It is a debasing of the Divine to want to set it up yonder in abstract heights, in a "cloud-cuckoo-land." And we will never live in spiritual realities if we conceive the spiritual only in its abstractness, if we cannot bring it into connection with the whole course of the world as this comes to meet us.

And this cosmic course, as far as our earthly life is concerned, meets us first of all in the fact that this earthly life comprises a certain number of years, and that these years present the return of certain events in a regular rhythm, as I indicated yesterday. After a year we return to approximately the same conditions of weather, of sun-position, and so forth. The course of the year thus enters into our earthly life in a rhythmical way.

We saw yesterday that this course of the year represents an in-and-out-breathing by the Earth itself of soul-spiritual elements. If we picture to ourselves once more the four high points of this Earth breathing-process, as we allowed them to come before our souls, we must say to ourselves: The time of the Christmas festival represents the time when the Earth holds its breath within it. The soul-spiritual part of the Earth is completely absorbed. Deep in the bosom of the Earth there rests all that the Earth unfolded during summer in order to let it be stimulated by the cosmos. All that opened up to the cosmos and was yielded up to its forces during the summertime has now been completely drawn in by the Earth, to rest in her depths at Christmas time. Man of course does not dwell in the earthly depths; physically he lives on the surface of the Earth. Soul-spiritually also, he does not dwell in the depths of the Earth, for he lives actually in the Earth's periphery; he lives in the atmosphere that surrounds the Earth.

Therefore esoteric wisdom has always recognized the essential being of the Earth at the time of the winter solstice, at Christmas time, as something concealed at first, as something which cannot be penetrated by the ordinary forces of human knowledge, something which belongs in the sphere of the esoteric mysteries. And in all ancient times when something comparable to our present Christmas festival existed, it was recognized that what goes on in connection with the Earth at Christmas time could be grasped only by initiation into mystery-knowledge, by the initiation still known in Greece as the Chthonian Mysteries. By means of this initiation, man forsook in a certain way the periphery of the Earth in which he lived with his ordinary consciousness, to immerse himself in something into which he could not submerge physically. He immersed himself in the soul-spiritual element, and thus he learned to know what the Earth becomes during midwinter, when she draws her soul-spiritual element into herself.

And then a man came to know through this Mystery initiation, that at the time of the winter solstice the Earth is especially receptive to permeation by the Moon forces. This was regarded as the secret — if I may express myself in the modern sense — as the Christmas secret of the ancient mysteries: that just at Christmas time one comes to know how the Earth, by being permeated and saturated by her spirit-soul-being, becomes especially receptive in her inner being to the activity of the Moon forces.

In certain ancient times, for example, no one was entrusted with a knowledge of healing science unless he was initiated in the Winter Mysteries, and understood how the Earth, through the holding of her breath, becomes especially susceptible inwardly to the activity of the Moon forces, how at this time she permeates especially the plants with healing forces, how at this time she makes the plant world, and to a certain extent also the world of the lower animals into something entirely different.

The Christmas initiation was felt as a descent into the depths of the earthly world. But something else was connected with this Christmas initiation; namely, something that was felt in a certain sense to be a danger for the human being. A man said to himself: "When anyone really observes his consciousness in connection with what lives in the Earth as Moon forces at Christmastime, he comes into a state of consciousness in which he must be inwardly very strong, must have inwardly fortified himself, in order to withstand the attack from all sides of the Ahrimanic powers, who live in the Earth precisely because of its having taken in the Moon activity." And only in the strength which a man had himself developed in his soul-spiritual being, in the strength to break the opposition of these forces, did he see what makes it possible to endure his earth existence over the long run.

But then some time after the celebration of these Christmas Mysteries, the teachers of the Mysteries gathered their pupils together, and as a sort of revelation, said to them the following: "Certainly, through initiation one can, in full consciousness, behold what is at work within the Earth at the time of the winter solstice. But with the oncoming of spring, when the plant world starts to grow, something rises up out of the depths of the Earth which permeates all that is growing and sprouting, permeates also man himself; namely, what the Ahrimanic powers bring about. At a time when man was still endowed with divine forces, as he was at the Earth's beginning, then through this primordial divine heritage men could still resist the attack of the Ahrimanic powers which broke over mankind in this way during the time of the winter moon. But (so the initiates told their pupils) a time will come when mankind will be rendered insensible to the spiritual through the agency of the Moon forces which the Earth takes up in the wintertime. With the growing and sprouting in the spring, a kind of intoxication with regard to the spiritual will come over mankind, depriving men of any consciousness that anything spiritual exists. Then, should mankind not find it possible to resist these intoxicating forces, the humanity of the Earth will go into decline and not be able to develop further with the Earth to future higher stages of earth evolution."



The initiates painted in gloomy colors the age which had to break in for humanity in the fifteenth century, when mankind will excel to be sure in abstract, dead thoughts, but when man can again acquire spiritual capacities only by gaining new strength to overcome the intoxicating forces that rise out of the Earth. This he can do by developing the particular spiritual force now accessible to mankind.

When we form such visualizations, we transpose ourselves, so to speak, into the connection that exists between the course of the year in nature and what lives in the spirit. We bring together what is otherwise abstract, merely thought-out, with what is the natural sensible course as it confronts us, for example, in the seasons.

The polar opposite of this Christmas Mystery is the St. John's Mystery, at the time of the summer solstice. Then the Earth has completely exhaled. The spirit-soul element of the Earth is then utterly surrendered to the super-earthly powers, to the cosmic powers. Then the spirit-soul element of the Earth takes in all that is extraterrestrial. Just as the ancient initiates had said of the Christmas Mystery, so they said also of the St. John's Mystery (we use modern forms of expression, but there were appropriate forms in the ancient Mysteries also) — the initiates said that it was necessary to attain initiation in order to penetrate the secrets of the St. John's Mystery, that is, the secrets of the heavens. For man belongs to the periphery of the Earth; he belongs neither within the Earth, nor as earthly man does he belong to the heavens. Hence he must be initiated into the secrets of the sub-earthly in order to come to know the secrets of the super-earthly.

In a certain way, the Easter Mystery and the Michael or Autumn Mystery were seen as holding the balance between the super-earthly and the sub-earthly. And the Michael Mystery, as we have said, will first attain its proper significance in the time that is still future to our own.

The Easter Mystery in its full magnitude entered into the evolution of mankind through the Mystery of Golgotha. And this Easter Mystery was understood, as I have already said, because remnants of the ancient clairvoyance still existed. At that time people could still raise themselves up in their Gemuets or feeling souls to the resurrected Christ. The Easter Mystery was therefore woven into that ritual which was not an initiation ritual, but a ritual for mankind in general; it was woven into the ritual of the celebration of the Mass.

But with the retreat of primitive clairvoyance, the understanding of the Easter Mystery was lost. People begin to discuss a matter only when they no longer understand it. All the discussion that began after the first Christian centuries about how the Easter thought is to be understood derive from the fact that people could no longer comprehend it in a direct elementary way.

Now we have often been able to apply to the Easter thought what anthroposophical spiritual science gives to us. What is essential here is that this anthroposophical spiritual research points again to forms of life which are not exhausted between birth and death in the sense world; that it places what can be spiritually investigated over

against what can be sensibly investigated; that it makes comprehensible how the Christ could converse with His disciples, even after the physical body was turned to dust. In the light of spiritual research, the Resurrection thought becomes alive again. But this Resurrection thought will be fully understood only if it is linked to what I might call its counter-pole. What then does the Resurrection thought really portray? The Christ Being descended from spiritual heights, entered into the body of Jesus and lived on Earth in this body, thereby bringing into the earthly sphere forces in themselves super-terrestrial. And these super-earthly forces which the Christ Being brought into the earthly sphere were from the time of the Mystery of Golgotha on, united with the forces of mankind's evolution. Since then that which the men of ancient times could behold only outside in cosmic space is to be feelingly perceived within the evolution of earthly humanity. Following the Resurrection, the Christ united Himself with mankind, and since then He lives, not only in the super-earthly heights, but also within the earth-existence; He lives in evolution, in the stream of mankind's evolution.

Above all, this event must be regarded not from the earthly point of view alone, but also from the super-earthly viewpoint. We can say that we should not view the Christ only in the way He comes to Earth out of heavenly worlds and becomes man, in the way He is given to men, but we should view this Christ Event also from the standpoint that the Christ actually departs from the spiritual world when He descends to the Earth.

Human beings saw the Christ arise in their realm. The Gods saw the Christ forsake the heavenly world and plunge down among mankind. For men the Christ appeared; for certain spiritual beings He vanished. Only when He passed through the Resurrection did He appear again to certain extraterrestrial spiritual beings, now shining out to them from the Earth like a star, a star which radiates out from the Earth into the spiritual world. Spiritual beings mark the Mystery of Golgotha by saying: "A star began to shine out from the Earth into the spiritual realm." And it was felt to be of immense importance for the spiritual world that the Christ had submerged into a human body, and had gone through death in this body. For by partaking in death in a human body He was enabled immediately after this death to undertake something which His former divine companions could by no means have accomplished.

These former divine companions confronted, as an inimical world, what even in earlier times was called "hell." But the efficacy of these spiritual beings stopped short at the gates of hell. These spiritual beings worked upon man. The forces of man extend even into hell. This signifies nothing other than man's subconscious projection into the Ahrimanic forces in the wintertime and also into the ascent of these Ahrimanic forces in the spring. The divine spiritual beings felt this as a world opposed to them. They saw it rise up out of the Earth and felt it to be an exceedingly problematic world. But they themselves had only a roundabout connection with it through man. They could only observe it in a certain way. But

because the Christ had descended to the Earth, had Himself become man, He could descend into the realm of these Ahrimanic powers and overcome them. This is expressed in the Creed as "the Descent into Hell."

This Descent into Hell provides the opposite pole to the Resurrection. This is what Christ has done for mankind: By descending from the divine heights and taking on the form of man, He became able actually to descend into the realm to whose dangers man is exposed, into which the other Gods, who had not been exposed to human death could not descend. In His way the Christ gained the victory over death. And therewith entered, I might say, as the opposite pole of the Descent into Hell, the ascent into the spiritual world, in spite of the fact that the Christ remained on Earth. For Christ had so united Himself with mankind that he had descended to that to which mankind is exposed. During the winter and spring seasons, He could win for man that which works out of extraterrestrial regions into the Earth again from St. John's to autumn. Thus in the Easter thought we see united in a certain way the Descent into the region of Hell, and through this descent the winning of the heavenly region for the further evolution of mankind.

All this belongs to a right conception of the Easter thought. But what would this Easter thought be if it could not become living! It was possible in ancient times to connect the right feeling awareness with the thought of the winter solstice only because they had on the other hand the St. John's thought. Schematically drawn: If one had the earthly with its deeply concealed winter nature (*orange*), then its counterpart was what in summer lay in the super-earthly periphery (*orange*). Both were to be reached only through initiation, yet they were connected by what was in the atmosphere surrounding the Earth, in the Earth's periphery (*green*), Christmas calls for St. John's. St. John's calls for Christmas. Man would rigidify under the influence of the Ahrimanic powers if he could not be exposed to the loosening Luciferic powers, who again give wings to thought, so that it need not remain rigid but can thaw again under the influence of the light.



Figure 1

At first humanity in its evolution had only the one pole, the Easter pole, and this Easter pole became paralyzed. The Easter festival lost its inner vitality. It will regain its inner life only when man can think about this festival in such a way that he can say to himself: "Through what is symbolically expressed in the Descent into Hell — which in reality can be understood as the Resurrection — a counterweight was given against something which had to come; namely, the paralyzing of all spiritual vision, its dying away in the earthly life. Prophetically, Christ Jesus wanted to prepare for what had to come; namely, the circumstance that man during his life on Earth between birth and death would have to forget the super-earthly, the spiritual, that he would in a certain way die to the spiritual. Opposed to this dying away of man in earthly life stands the Easter thought of the victory of super-earthly life over the earthly."

On the one side is this: Man descends from his pre-earthly life; but in the period that dawned in the first half of the fifteenth century, he will in his earthly life more and more forget his super-earthly origin; as to his soul-being he will die away, as it were, in the earthly life. That stands on the one side.

On the other stands this: There was a spiritual, heavenly Being, Who by His deed, working out of the heavens into the Earth, set forth the counter-image. That spiritual Being descended into a human body, and in the Resurrection has, through His own being, placed the super-earthly spiritual among the men of Earth. In remembrance of this we have the Easter festival, which puts before mankind the picture of the burial of Christ Jesus and the Resurrection of Christ Jesus.

He was laid in the grave and thereafter He arose — this is the Easter thought, as it stands in cosmic records... "Look upon thyself, O Man; thou descendest out of the super-earthly worlds; thou art threatened by the danger that thy soul will die away in the earthly life. Therefore the Christ appears, Who sets before thine eyes how that from which thou also didst arise, how that super-earthly spiritual conquers death. There stands before thee in mighty images such as could be placed before mankind: the entombment of Christ Jesus, the Resurrection of Christ Jesus. He was laid in the grave. He rose from the grave and appeared to those who could behold Him."

But with the paralyzed soul forces of man today, this image can no longer become living. Where could it become alive? In a traditional faith man can still look upon what the Easter festival gives him: Upon the sublime picture of the burial and the Resurrection. But out of the inner force of his soul, he can no longer, of himself, find anything to connect with this Easter thought, with the thought of the entombment and the Resurrection. It is out of spiritual knowledge that he must again unite something with it.

And this something is another thought, to which there can be no alternative. It is, however, possible for a human being to let spiritual knowledge approach him so that he may understand this "other." Let us place this "other" before ourselves, so as to inscribe it deeply within our souls. *Easter thought: He has been laid in the grave; He is risen.* Now let us place before ourselves the other thought which must come over mankind: *He is risen and can confidently be laid in the grave. Easter thought: He has been laid in the grave; He is risen. Michaelmas thought: He is risen and can confidently be laid in the grave.*

The first thought, the Easter thought, pertains to the *Christ*; the second thought pertains to the *human being*. It pertains to the man who directly comprehends the power of the Easter thought, comprehends how when spiritual knowledge enters into the earthly life of the present, in which his soul-spiritual is dying away, his soul can resurrect, so that he becomes *living* between birth and death, so that in the earthly life he becomes *inwardly alive*.

The human being must through spiritual knowledge comprehend this inner resurrection, this inner awakening; then will he confidently be laid in the grave. Then he may be laid in the grave, through which he otherwise would fall prey to those Ahrimanic powers who work within the earth realm at the time of the winter solstice.

And the festival which contains this thought: "He is risen and can confidently be laid in the grave" — this festival must fall in the time when the leaves are beginning to turn yellow and fall from the trees, when the fruits have ripened, when the Sun has received that power which brings to maturity what in the spring was budding and sprouting, full of the forces of growth, but which also brings withering and the inclination to seek again the inner part of the Earth; when what is developing on the Earth begins to be a symbol of the grave.

If we place the Easter festival at the time when life begins to bud and to sprout, when the forces of growth attain their highest point, then the other festival, which contains: "He is risen and can confidently be laid in the grave," we must place at the time when Earth nature begins to wither, when the mood of the grave is spreading abroad in Earth nature, when the symbol of the grave can appear before the soul of man. Then the Michael thought begins to stir in man, that thought which is not, like the Easter thought in the earliest centuries of Christianity, directed toward a kind of inner perceiving (*Anschauung*).<sup>[3]</sup>

In the first centuries of Christianity, this feeling perception was directed to the Christ laid in the grave and risen. In this *perception* the soul was made strong, was filled with its strongest forces. In the festival-thought at the time of the fall equinox, the soul must feel its strength when appeal is made not to its perceiving, but to its *will*. "Take into thyself the Michael thought which confers the Ahrimanic powers, that thought which makes thee strong to gain here on Earth knowledge of the spirit, so that thou canst overcome the powers of Death." — As the Easter thought is directed to the perception, this thought is directed to the will-powers: to take up the Michael force, which means *to take the force of spiritual knowledge into the will-forces*. And so the Easter thought can become living, can be brought directly to the human soul and spirit, when now the Michael thought, the thought of the Michael festival in the autumn, is felt to be the counter-pole of the Easter thought — just as the St. John's thought was perceived to be the counter-pole of the Christmas thought. As the Christmas thought by its inner livingness, has brought forth the St. John's thought after a half-year, so must the Easter thought bring forth the Michael thought. Mankind must attain an esoteric maturity, so as to think, not merely abstractly, but to be able again to think so concretely that men can again become festival-creating. Then it will be possible again to unite something spiritual with the cycle of sense phenomena.

All our thoughts are so abstract! But no matter how remarkable they are, how intelligent, if they remain abstract, life will not be able to penetrate them. When today men reflect that Easter might be set abstractly on any day, no longer according to the constellations of the stars, when today all higher knowledge is darkened, when man no longer sees any relation between insight into the soul-spiritual and the natural-physical forces, the force must once more awaken in man which will be able to unite something spiritual directly with the sense phenomena of the world.

Wherein then did the spiritual strength of man consist, making him able to create festivals in the course of the year, in accordance with the yearly phenomena? It consisted in the primal spiritual force. Today men can continue to celebrate festivals according to the ancient traditional custom, but they must gain once more the esoteric force out of themselves to "speak" something into Nature that accords with natural events. It must become possible to grasp the Michael thought as the

blossom of the Easter thought. While the Easter thought stems from physical blossoming, it will become possible to place the blossom of the Easter thought — the Michael thought — into the course of the year as the outcome of physical withering.

People must learn once more to "think" the spiritual "together with" the course of nature. It is not admissible today for a person merely to indulge in esoteric speculations; it is necessary today to be able once again to *do the esoteric*. But people will be able to do this only when they can conceive their thoughts so concretely, so livingly that they don't withdraw from everything that is going on around them when they think, but rather that they think *with* the course of events: "think together with" the fading of the leaves, with the ripening of the fruits, in a Michaelic way, just as at Easter one knows how to think with the sprouting, springing, blossoming plants and flowers.

When it is understood how to think with the course of the year, then forces will intermingle with the thoughts that will let men again hold a dialogue with the divine spiritual powers revealing themselves from the stars. Men have drawn down from the stars the power to establish festivals which have an inner human validity. Festivals must be founded out of inner esoteric force. Then from the dialogue with the fading, ripening plants, with the dying Earth, by finding the right inward festival mood, men will also again be able to hold converse with the Gods and link human existence with divine existence.



2 April 1923, Dornach

We should not underestimate the significance it once held for mankind to focus the whole attention during the year on a festival-time. Although in our time the celebration of religious festivals is largely a matter of habit, it was not always so. There were times when people united their consciousness with the course of the year; when, let us say, at the beginning of the year, they felt themselves standing within the course of time in such a way that they said to themselves: "There is such and such a degree of cold or warmth now; there are certain relationships among the other weather conditions, certain relationships also between the growth or non-growth in plants or animals." — People experienced along with Nature the gradual changes and metamorphoses she went through. But they shared this experience with Nature in such a way — when their consciousness was united with the natural phenomena — that they oriented this consciousness toward a specific festival. Let us say, at the beginning of the year, through the various feeling perceptions associated with the passing of winter, the consciousness was directed toward the Easter time, or in the fall, with the fading away of life, toward Christmas. Then men's souls were filled with feelings which found expression in the way they related themselves to what the festivals meant to them.

Thus people partook in the course of the year, and this participation meant for the most part permeating with spirit not only what they saw and heard around them but what they experienced with their whole human being. They experienced the course of the year as an organic life process, just as in the human being when he is a child we relate the utterances of the childish soul with the awkward movements of a child, or its imperfect way of speaking. As we connect specific soul-experiences with the change of teeth, other soul experiences with the later bodily changes, so men once saw the ruling and weaving of the spiritual in the successive changes of outer nature, in growth and decline, or in a waxing followed by a waning.

Now all this cannot help affecting the whole way man *feels* himself as earthly man in the universe. Thus we can say that in that period at the beginning of our reckoning of time, when the remembrance of the Event of Golgotha began to be celebrated which later became the Easter festival — in that period in which the Easter festival was livingly felt and perceived, when man still took part in the turning of the year as I have just described it — then it was in essence so, that people felt their own lives surrendered, given over to the outer spiritual-physical world. Their feeling told them that in order to make their lives complete, they had need of the vision of the Entombment and the Resurrection, of that sublime image of the Mystery of Golgotha.



But it is from filling the consciousness in such a way that *inspirations* arise for men. People are not always conscious of these inspirations, but it is a secret of human evolution that from these religious attitudes toward the phenomena of the world, inspirations for the whole of life proceed.

First of all, we must understand clearly that during a certain epoch, during the Middle Ages, the people who oriented the spiritual life were priests, and those priests were concerned above all with the ordering of the festivals. They set the tone for the celebration of the festivals. The priesthood was that group of men who presented the festivals before the rest of mankind, before the laity, and who gave the festivals their content. In so doing the priests themselves felt this content very deeply; and the entire soul-condition that resulted from the inspiring effect of the festivals was expressed in the rest of the soul-life.

The Middle Ages would not have produced what is called Scholasticism — the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus and the other Scholastics — if this philosophy, this world conception, with all its social consequences, had not been inspired by the most important thought of the Church, by the *Easter thought*. In the vision of the descending Christ, Who lives for a time in man on Earth and then goes through the Resurrection, that soul impulse was given which led to the particular relation between faith and science, between knowledge and revelation which was agreed upon by the Scholastics. That out of man himself, only knowledge of the sensible world can be acquired, whereas everything connected with the super-sensible world has to be gained through revelation — this was determined basically by the way the Easter thought followed upon the Christmas thought.

And if, in turn, the idea-world of natural science today is totally the product of Scholasticism, as I have often explained to you, we must then say: "Although the natural science of the present is not aware of it, its knowledge is essentially a direct imprint of the Easter thought which prevailed in the early Middle Ages and then became paralyzed in the later Middle Ages and in modern times." Notice the way natural science applies in its ideas what is so popular today and indeed dominates our culture: it devotes its ideas entirely to dead nature; it considers itself incapable of rising above dead nature. This is a result of that inspiration which was stimulated by viewing the Laying in the Grave.

As long as people were able to add the Resurrection to the Entombment as something to which they looked up, they then added also the *revelation* concerning the super-sensible to mere outer sense-knowledge. But as it became more and more common to view the Resurrection as an inexplicable and therefore unjustifiable miracle, revelation — that is, the super-sensible world — came to be repudiated. The present-day natural scientific view is inspired solely by the conception of Good Friday and lacks any conception of Easter Sunday.

We need to recognize this inner connection: The inspired element is always that which is experienced within all the festival moods in relation to Nature. We must come to know the connection between this inspiring element and all that comes to

expression in human life. When we once gain an insight into the intimate connection that exists between this living-oneself-into the course of the year and what men think, feel, and will, then we shall also recognize how significant it would be if we were to succeed, for example, in making the Michael festival in autumn a reality; if we were really to succeed, out of spiritual foundations, out of esoteric foundations, in making the autumn Michael festival something that would pass over into men's consciousness and again work inspiringly.

If the Easter thought were to receive its coloration through the fact that to the Easter thought "He has been laid in the grave and is arisen" the other thought is added, the human thought, "He is arisen and may be laid in the grave without perishing" — If this Michael thought could become living, what tremendous significance just such an event could have for men's whole perceiving (*Empfindung*), and feeling and willing — and how this could "live itself into" the whole social structure of mankind!

My dear friends, all that people are hoping for from a renewal of the social life will not come about from all the discussions and all the institutions based on what is externally sensible. It will be able to come about only when a mighty inspiration-thought goes through mankind, when an inspiration-thought takes hold of mankind through which the moral-spiritual element will once again be felt and perceived along with the natural-sensible element.

People today are like earthworms, I might say, looking for sunlight under the ground, while to find the sunlight they need to come forth above the surface of the earth. Nothing in reality will be accomplished by all of today's organizations and plans for reform; something can be achieved only by the mighty impact of a thought-impulse drawn out of the spirit. For it must be clear to us that the Easter thought itself can only attain its new "nuance" through being complemented by the Michael thought.

Let us consider this Michael thought somewhat more closely. If we look at the Easter thought, we have to consider that Easter occurs at the time of the bursting and sprouting life of spring. At this time the Earth is breathing out her soul-forces, in order that these soul-forces may be permeated again by the astral element surrounding the Earth, the extra-earthly, cosmic element. The Earth is breathing out her soul. What does this mean?

It means that certain elemental beings which are just as much in the periphery of the Earth as the air is or as the forces of growth are — that these unite their own being with the out-breathed Earth soul in those regions in which it is spring. These beings float and merge with the out-breathed Earth soul. They become dis-individualized; they lose their individuality and rise in the general earthly soul element. We see countless elemental beings in spring just around Easter time in the final stage of the individual life which was theirs during the winter. We see them merging into the general earth soul element and rising like a sort of cloud (*red, yellow, with green*). I might say that during the wintertime these elemental beings

are within the soul element of the Earth, where they had become individualized; before this Easter time they had a certain individuality, flying and floating about as individual beings. During Easter time we see them come together in a general cloud (*red*), and form a common mass within the Earth soul (*green*). But by so doing these elemental beings lose their consciousness to a certain degree and enter into a sort of sleeping condition. Certain animals sleep in the winter; these elemental beings sleep in summer. This sleep is deepest during St. John's time, when they are completely asleep. Then they begin once more to individualize, and when the Earth breathes in again at Michaelmas, at the end of September, we can see them already as separate beings again.



Figure 1

Man needs these elemental beings... This is not in his consciousness, but man needs them nonetheless, in order to unite them with himself, so that he can prepare his future. And man could unite these elemental beings with himself, if at a certain festival time — it would have to be at the end of September — he could perceive with a special inner soul-filled liveliness how Nature herself changes toward the autumn; if he could perceive how the animal and plant life recedes, how certain animals begin to seek their shelters against the winter; how the plant leaves get their autumn coloring; how all Nature fades and withers.



Figure 2

It is true that spring is fair, and it is a fine capacity of the human soul to perceive the beauty of the spring, the growing, sprouting, burgeoning life. But to be able to perceive also when the leaves fade and take on their fall coloring, when the animals creep away — to be able to feel how in the sensible which is dying away, the gleaming, shining, soul-spiritual element arises — to be able to perceive how with the yellowing of the leaves there is a descent of the springing and sprouting life, but how the sensible becomes yellow in order that the *spiritual* can live in the yellowing as such — to be able to perceive how in the falling of the leaves the ascent of the spirit takes place, how the spiritual is the counter-manifestation of the fading sense-perceptible; this should as a perceptive feeling for the spirit — ensoul the human being in autumn! Then he would prepare himself in the right way precisely for Christmastide.

Man should become permeated, out of anthroposophical spiritual science, by the truth that it is precisely the *spiritual* life of man on Earth which depends on the declining physical life. Whenever we think, the physical matter in our nerves is destroyed; the thought struggles up out of the matter as it perishes. To feel the becoming of the thought in one's self, the gleaming up of the idea in the human soul, in the whole human organism of man to be akin to the yellowing leaves, the withering foliage, the drying and shriveling of the plant world in Nature; to feel the kinship of man's spiritual "being-ness" with Nature's spiritual "being-ness" — this can give man that impulse which strengthens his will, that impulse which points man to the *permeation of his will with spirituality*.

In so doing, however, in permeating his will with spirituality, the human being becomes an associate of the Michael activity on earth. And when man lives with Nature in this way as autumn approaches and brings this living-with-Nature to expression in an appropriate festival content, then he will be able truly to perceive the completing (*Erganzung*) of the Easter mood. But by means of this, something else will become clear to him. — You see, what man thinks, feels, and wills today is really inspired by the Easter mood, which is actually one-sided. This Easter mood is essentially a result of the sprouting, burgeoning life, which causes everything to merge as in a pantheistic unity. Man is surrendered to the unity of Nature, and to the unity of the world generally. This is also the structure of our spiritual life today. Man wants everything to revert to a unity, to a monon; he is either a devotee of universal spirit or universal nature; and he is accordingly either a spiritualistic Monist or a materialistic Monist. Everything is included in an indefinite unity. This is essentially the spring mood.

But when we look into the autumn mood, with the rising and becoming free of the spiritual, and the dropping away and withering of the sensible (*red*), then we have a view of the spiritual as such, and the sensible as such.



Figure 3

The sprouting plant in the spring has the spiritual within its sprouting and growing; the spiritual is mingled with the sensible; we have essentially a unity. The withering plant lets the leaf fall, and the spirit rises; we have the spirit, the invisible, super-sensible spirit, and the material falling out of it. I would say that it is just as if we had in a container, first, a uniform fluid in which something is dissolved, and then by

some process we should cause this to separate from the fluid and fall to the bottom as sediment. We have now separated the two which were united, which had formed a unity.

The spring tends to weave everything together, to blend everything into a vague, undifferentiated unity. The view of the autumn, if we only look at it in the right way, if we contrast it in the right way with the view of the spring, calls attention to the way the spiritual works on the one side and the physical-material on the other. The Easter thought loses nothing of value if the Michaelmas thought is added to it. We have on the one side the Easter thought, where everything appears — I might say — as a pantheistic mixture, a unity. Then we have what is differentiated; but the differentiation does not occur in any irregular, chaotic fashion. We have regularity throughout.

Think of the cyclic course: joining together, intermingling, unifying; an intermediate state when the differentiating takes place; the complete differentiation; then again the merging of what was differentiated within the uniform, and so forth. There you see always besides these two conditions yet a third: you see the *rhythm between* the differentiated and the undifferentiated, in a certain way, between the in-breathing of what was differentiated-out and the out-breathing again, an *intermediate condition*. You see a rhythm: a physical-material, a spiritual, a working-in-each-other of the physical-material and the spiritual: a soul element.

But the important thing is this: not to stop with the common human fancy that everything must be led back to a unity; thereby everything, whether the unity is a spiritual or a material one, is led back to the indefiniteness of the cosmic night. In the night all cows are gray; in spiritual Monism all ideas are gray; in material Monism they are likewise gray. These are only distinctions of perceiving; they are of no concern for a higher view. What matters is this: that we as human beings can so unite ourselves with the cosmic course that we are in a position to follow the living transition from the unity into the trinity, the return from trinity into unity. When, by complementing the Easter thought with the Michael thought in this way we have become able to perceive rightly the primordial trinity in all existence, then we shall take it into our whole attitude of soul. Then we shall be in a position to understand that actually all life depends upon the activity and the interworking of primordial trinities. And when we have the Michael festival inspiring such a view in the same way that the one-sided Easter festival inspired the view now existing, then we shall have an inspiration, a Nature/Spirit impulse, to introduce threefoldness, the impulse of threefoldness into all the observing and forming of life. And it depends finally and only upon the introduction of this impulse, whether the destructive forces in human evolution can be transformed once more into ascending forces.

One might say that when we spoke of the threefold impulse it was in a certain sense a test of whether the Michael thought is already strong enough so that it can be felt how such an impulse flows directly out of the forces that shape the time. It was a test of the human soul, of whether the Michael thought is strong enough as yet in a large number of people. Well, the test yielded a negative result. The Michael thought

is not strong enough in even a small number of people for it to be perceived truly in all its time-shaping power and forcefulness. And it will indeed hardly be possible, for the sake of new forces of ascent, to unite human souls with the original formative cosmic forces in the way that is necessary, unless such an inspiring force as can permeate a Michael festival — unless, that is to say, a new formative impulse — can come forth from the depths of the esoteric life.

If instead of the passive members of the Anthroposophical Society, even only a few active members could be found, then it would become possible to set up further deliberations to consider such a thought. It is essential to the Anthroposophical Society that while stimuli within the Society should of course be carried out, the members should actually attach primary value, I might say, to participating in what is coming to pass. They may perhaps focus the contemplative forces of their souls on what is taking place, but the activity of their own souls does not become united with what is passing through the time as an impulse. Hence, with the present state of the Anthroposophical Movement, there can of course be no question of considering as part of its activity anything like what has just now been spoken of as an esoteric impulse. But it must be understood how mankind's evolution really moves, that the great sustaining forces of humanity's world-evolution come not from what is propounded in superficial words, but from entirely different quarters.

This has always been known in ancient times from primeval elementary clairvoyance. In ancient times it was not the custom for the young people to learn, for example, that there are so and so many chemical elements; then another is discovered and there are then 75, then 76; another is discovered and there are 77. One cannot anticipate how many may still be discovered. Accidentally, one is added to 75, to 76, and so on. In what is adduced here as number, there is no inner reality. And so it is everywhere. Who is interested today in anything that would bring to revelation, let us say, that a systematic threefoldness or trinity prevails in plants! Order after order is discovered, species after species; and they are counted just as though one were counting a chance pile of sticks or stones. But the working of number in the world rests on a real quality of being, and this quality must be fathomed. Only think how short a time lies behind us since knowledge of substance was led back to the trinity of the salty, the mercurial, and the phosphoric; how in this a trinity of archetypal forces was seen; how everything that appeared as individual had to be fitted into one or another of the three archetypal forces.

And it is different again when we look back into still earlier times in which it was easier for people to come to something like this because of the very situation of their culture; for the Oriental cultures lay nearer to the Torrid Zone, where such things were more readily accessible to the ancient elementary clairvoyance. Today, however, it is possible to come to these things in the Temperate Zone through free, exact clairvoyance.... Yet people want to go back to the ancient cultures! In those days people did not distinguish spring, summer, autumn, winter. To distinguish spring, summer, autumn, winter leads us to a mere succession because it contains

the "four." It would have been quite impossible for the ancient Indian culture, for example, to think of something like the course of the year as ruled by the four, because this contains nothing of the archetypal forms underlying all activity.

When I wrote my book, *Theosophy*, it was impossible simply to list in succession physical body, etheric body, astral body, and ego, although we can summarize it this way once the matter is before us, once it is inwardly understood. I had therefore to arrange them according to the number three: physical body, ether body, astral body, forming the first trinity. Then comes the trinity interwoven with it: sentient soul, intellectual soul, consciousness soul; then the trinity interwoven with this: spirit self, life spirit, spirit man — three times three interwoven with one another in such a way as to become seven.

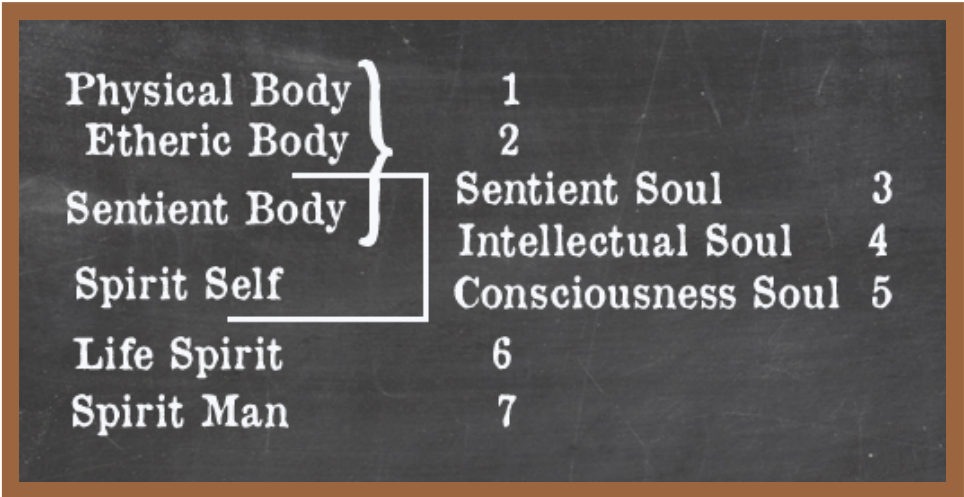


Figure 4

Only when we look at the present stage of mankind's evolution does the four appear, which is really a secondary number. If we want to see the inwardly active principle, if we want to see the formative process, we must see forming and shaping as associated with threefoldness, with trinity.

Hence, the ancient Indian view was of a year divided into a hot season, which would approximate our months of April, May, June, July; a wet season, comprising approximately our months, August, September, October, November; and a cold season, which would include our months, December, January, February, March. The boundaries do not need to be rigidly fixed according to the months but are only approximate; they can be thought of as shifting. But the course of the year was thought of according to the principle of the "three."

And thus man's whole state of soul would be imbued with the predisposition to observe this primal trinity in all weaving and working, and hence to interweave it also into all human creating and shaping. We can even say that it is only possible to



have true ideas of the free spiritual life, the life of rights, the social-economic life, when we perceive in the depths this triple pulse of cosmic activity, which must also permeate human activity.

Any reference to this sort of thing today is regarded as some sort of superstition, whereas it is considered great wisdom simply to count "one" and again "one," "two," "three," and so on. But Nature does not take such a course. If we look, however, *only* at a realm in which everything is woven together, as is the case with Nature in springtime — which of course we must look at if we want to observe the interweaving of things — then we can never restore the pulse of three.

But when anyone follows the whole course of the year, when he sees how the "three" is organized, how the spiritual and the physical-material life are present as a duality, and the rhythmic interweaving of the two as the third, then he perceives this three-in-one, one-in-three, and learns to know how the human being can place himself in this cosmic activity: three to one, one to three.

It would become the whole disposition of the human soul to permeate the cosmos, to unite itself with cosmic worlds, if once the Michael thought could awaken as a festival thought in such a way that we were to place a Michael festival in the second half of September alongside the Easter festival; if to the thought of the *resurrection of the God after death* could be added the thought, produced by the Michael force, of the *resurrection of man from death*, so that man through the Resurrection of Christ would find the force to die in Christ. This means, taking the risen Christ into one's soul during earthly life, so as to be able to die in Him — that is, to be able to die, not at death but when one is living.

Such an inner consciousness as this would result from the inspiring element that would come from a Michael service. We can realize full well how far removed from any such idea is our materialistic time, which is also a time grown narrow-minded and pedantic. Of course, nothing can be expected of us, so long as it remains dead and abstract. But if with the same enthusiasm with which festivals were once introduced in the world when people had the force to form festivals, — if such a thing happens again, then it will work inspiringly. Indeed it will work inspiringly for our whole spiritual and our whole social life. Then that which we need will be present in life: not abstract spirit on one hand and spirit-void nature on the other, but Nature permeated with spirit, and spirit forming and shaping naturally. For these are one, and they will once again weave religion, science, and art into oneness, because they will understand how to conceive the trinity in religion, science, and art in the sense of the Michael thought, so that these three can then be united in the right way in the Easter thought, in the anthroposophical shaping and forming. This can work religiously, artistically, cognitively, and can also differentiate religiously, cognitively. Then the anthroposophical impulse would consist in perceiving in the Easter season the unity of science, religion, and art; and then at Michaelmas perceiving how the three — who have *one* mother, the Easter mother — how the

three become "sisters" and stand side by side, but mutually complement one another. Then the Michael thought which should become living as a festival in the course of the year, would be able to work inspiringly on all domains of human life.

With such things as these, which belong to the truly esoteric, we should permeate ourselves, at least in our cognition, to begin with. If then the time could come when there are actively working personalities, such a thing could actually become an impulse which singly and alone would be able, in the present condition of humanity, to replace the descending forces with ascending ones.



*7 April 1923, Dornach*

I have frequently referred recently to the connection the course of the year has with various aspects of human life, and during the Easter days I pointed especially to the connection with the celebration of festivals. Today I should like to go back to very ancient times and say more on this subject, just in relation to the ancient Mysteries. This can perhaps deepen in one way or another what we have spoken of before.

To the people of very ancient periods on Earth, the festivals that took place during the year formed a very significant part of their lives. We know that in those ancient times the human consciousness worked in an entirely different way from that of later times. We might ascribe a somewhat dreamy nature to this old form of consciousness. And indeed it was out of this dream condition that those insights arose in the human soul, in the human consciousness, which then took on the form of myths and in fact became mythology.

Through this dreamy, or we can also say instinctively clairvoyant consciousness people saw more deeply into the spiritual environment. But precisely through this more intensive kind of participation, not just in the sensible workings of Nature, as is the case today, but also in the spiritual events, people were all the more involved with the phenomena connected with the cycle of the year, with the differing aspects of Nature in spring and in autumn. I have pointed to this just in recent days.

Today I want to share something entirely different with you in this regard, and that is, how the festival of Midsummer, which has become our St. John's festival, and the Midwinter festival, which has become our Christmas, were celebrated in connection with the old Mystery teachings. To begin with, we must be quite clear that the humanity of the ancient times of which we are speaking did not have a full ego-consciousness, as we do today. In the dreamlike consciousness, a full ego-consciousness was lacking; and when this is the case, people do not perceive precisely that which present-day humanity is so proud of. Thus the people of that period did not perceive what existed in dead nature, in the mineral nature.

Let us keep this firmly in mind, my dear friends: It was not a consciousness that flowed along in abstract thoughts, but it lived in pictures; yet it was dreamlike. These people entered into, for example, the sprouting, burgeoning plant-life and plant-nature in spring far more than is the case today. Again, they felt the shedding of the leaves, their drying up in autumn, the whole dying away of the plant world; felt deeply also the changes the animal world lived through during the course of the year; felt the whole human environment to be different when the air was filled with butterflies fluttering and beetles humming. They felt their own human weaving in a certain way as being alongside the weaving and being of the plants and animal

existence. But they not only had no interest, they had no proper consciousness for the mineral realm, for the dead world outside them. This is one side of the earlier human consciousness.

The other side is this: that no interest existed among this ancient humanity for the *form* of man in general. It is very difficult today to imagine what the human perception was in this regard, that people in general took no particular interest in the human figure as a space-form. They had, however, an intense interest in what pertains to race. And the farther back we go into ancient cultures, the less do we find people with the common consciousness interested in the human form. On the other hand, they were interested in the color of the skin, in the racial temperament. This is what people noticed. On the one side man was not interested in the dead mineral world, nor, on the other, in the human form. There was an interest, as we have said, in what pertains to race, rather than in the universally human, including the outer form of man.

The great teachers of the Mysteries simply accepted this as a fact. How they thought about it, I will show you graphically in a drawing. They said to themselves: "The people have a dreamlike consciousness by means of which they perceive very clearly the plant life in their environment." — In their dream-pictures these people indeed lived with the plant life; but their dream consciousness did not extend to the comprehension of the mineral world. So the Mystery teachers said to themselves: "The human consciousness reaches on the one side to the plant life [*see drawing*], which is dreamily experienced, but not to the mineral; this lies outside human consciousness. And on the other side, men feel within them what still binds them with the animal world, that is, what pertains to race, what is typical of the animal. [*See drawing*]. On the other hand, what makes man really man, his upright form, the space form of his being, lies outside of human consciousness."

Thus, the specifically human lay outside the interest of these people of ancient times. We can characterize the human by thinking of it, in the sense of this ancient humanity, as enclosed within this space [*shaded portion in drawing*], while the mineral and the specifically human lay outside the realm of knowledge generally accessible to those people who carried on their lives outside the Mysteries.

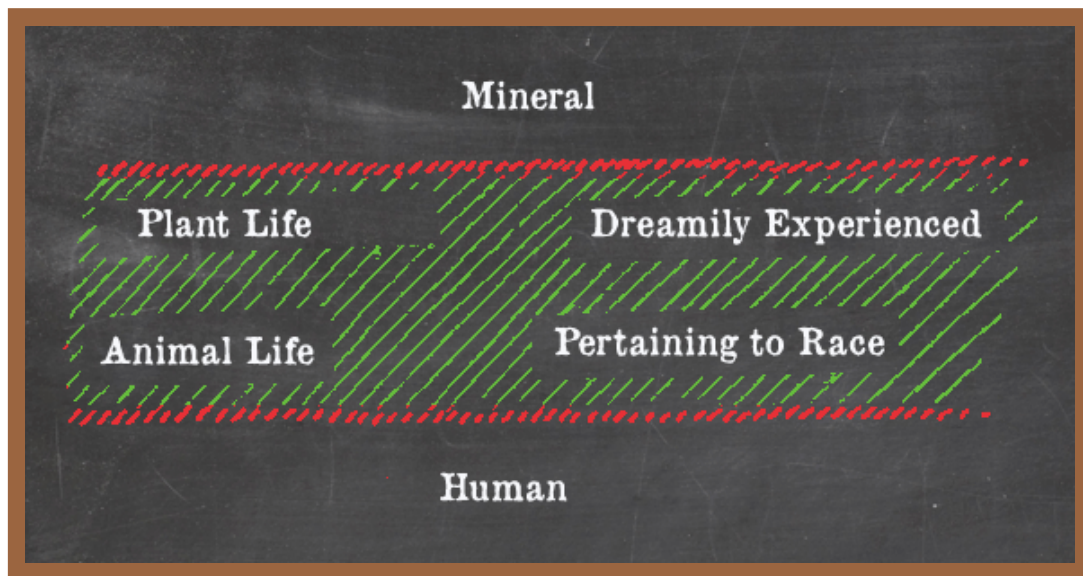


Figure 1

But what I have just said applies only in general. With his own forces, with what man experienced in his own being, he could not penetrate beyond this space [see *drawing*], to the mineral on the one side, to the human on the other. But there were ceremonies originating in the Mysteries which brought to man in the course of the year something approximating the human ego-consciousness on the one side and the perception of the general mineral kingdom on the other.

Strange as it may sound to people of the present time, it is nevertheless true that the priests of the ancient Mysteries arranged festivals by whose unusual effects man was lifted out above the plant-like to the mineral, and thereby at a certain time of year experienced a lighting up of his ego. It was as if the ego shone into the dream-consciousness. You know that even in a person's dreams today, one's own ego, which is then seen, often constitutes an element of the dream.

And so at the time of the St. John's festival, through the ceremonies that were arranged for those among the people who wanted to take part in them, ego-consciousness shone in just at the height of summer. And at this time of midsummer people could perceive the mineral realm at least to the extent necessary to help them attain a kind of ego-consciousness, whereby the ego appeared as something that entered into dreams from outside. In order to bring this about, the participants in the oldest midsummer festivals — those of the summer solstice which have become our St. John's festival — the participants were led to unfold a musical-poetic element in round dances having a strong rhythmic quality and accompanied by song. Certain presentations and performances were filled with distinctive musical recitative accompanied by primitive instruments. Such a festival was completely immersed in the musical-poetic element. What man had in his dream-consciousness he poured out into the cosmos, as it were, in the form of music, in song and dance.

Modern man can have no true appreciation of what was accomplished by way of music and song during those intense and widespread folk festivals of ancient times, which took place under the guidance of men who in turn had received their guidance from the Mysteries. For what music and poetry have come to be since then is far removed from the simple, primitive, elemental form of music and poetry which was unfolded in those times at the height of summer under the guidance of the Mysteries. For everything the people did in performing their round-dances, accompanied by singing and primitive poetic recitations, had the single goal of bringing about a soul mood in which there occurred what I have just called the shining of the ego into the human spirit.

But if those ancient people had been asked how they came to form such songs and such dances, by means of which there could arise what I have described, they would have given an answer highly paradoxical to modern man. They would have said, for example: "Much of it has been given to us by tradition, for those who went before us have also done these things." But in certain ancient times they would have said: "One can learn these things also today without having any tradition, if one simply develops further what manifests itself. One can still learn today how to make use of instruments, how to form dances, how to master the singing voice" — and now comes the paradox in what these ancient people would have said. They would have said: "It is learned from the *songbirds*." — For they understood in a deep way the whole import of the songbirds' singing.

My dear friends, mankind has long ago forgotten why the songbirds sing. It is true that men have preserved the art of song, the art of poetry, but in the age of intellectualism in which the intellect has dominated everything, they have forgotten the connection of singing with the whole universe. Even someone who is musically inspired, who sets the art of music high above the commonplace, even such a man, speaking out of this later intellectualistic age, says: "I sing as the bird sings who dwells in the branches. The song that issues from my throat is my reward, and an ample reward it is." Indeed, my dear friends, the man of a certain period says this. The bird, however, would never say such a thing. He would never say: "The song that issues from my throat is my reward." And just as little would the pupils of the ancient Mystery schools have said it. For when at a certain time of year the larks and the nightingales sing, what is thereby formed streams out into the cosmos, not through the air, but through the etheric element; it vibrates outward in the cosmos up to a certain boundary... then it vibrates back again to Earth, to be received by the animal realm — only now the divine-spiritual essence of the cosmos has united with it.

And thus it is that the nightingales and the larks send forth their voices into the universe (*red*) and that what they thus send forth comes back to them etherically (*yellow*), for the time during which they do not sing;



Figure 2

but in the meantime it has been filled with the content of the divine-spiritual. The larks send their voices out over the cosmos, and the divine spiritual, which takes part in the forming, in the whole configuration of the animal kingdom, streams back to the Earth on the waves of what had streamed out in the songs of the larks and the nightingales.

Therefore if anyone speaks, not from the standpoint of the intellectualistic age, but out of the truly all-encompassing human consciousness, he really cannot say: "I sing as the bird sings who dwells in the branches. The song that issues from my throat is my reward, and an ample reward it is." Rather, he would have to say: "I sing as the bird sings who dwells in the branches. And the song which streams forth from his throat into the cosmic expanses returns to the Earth as a blessing, fructifying the earthly life with divine spiritual impulses which then work on in the bird world and which can only work in the bird world because they find their way in on the waves of what has been 'sung out' to them into the cosmos."

Now of course not all creatures are nightingales and larks; also of course not all of them send out song; but something similar even though it is not so beautiful, goes out into the cosmos from the whole animal world. In those ancient times this was understood, and therefore the pupils of the Mystery-pupils were instructed in such singing and dancing as they could then perform at the St. John's festival, if I may call it by the modern name. Human beings sent this out into the cosmos, of course not now in animal form, but in humanized form, as a further development of what the animals send out into cosmic space. — And there is something else yet that belonged to those festivals: not only the dancing, the music, the song, but afterward, the *listening*. First, there was the active performance in the festivals; then

the people were directed to listen to what came back to them. For through their dances, their singing, and all that was poetic in their performances, they had sent forth the great *questions* to the divine spiritual of the cosmos. Their performance streamed up, as it were, into cosmic spaces as the water of the earth rises, forming clouds above and dropping down again as rain. Thus, the effects of the human festival performances arose and came back again — of course not as rain, but as something which manifested itself to man as *ego-power*. And the people had a sensitive feeling for that particular transformation which took place in the air and warmth around the Earth, just about the time of the St. John's festival. Of course the man of the present intellectualistic age disregards anything like this. He has something else to do than people of olden times. In these times, as also in others, he has to go to five o'clock teas, to coffee parties; he has to attend the theater, and so on; he simply has something else to do which is not dependent on the time of year. In the doing of all this, man forgets that delicate transformation which takes place in the Earth's atmospheric environment.

But these people of olden times did feel how different the air and warmth become around St. John's time, at the height of summer, how these take on something of the plant nature. Just consider what kind of a perception that was — this sensitive feeling for all that goes on in the plant world. Let us suppose that this is the Earth, and everywhere plants are coming out of the Earth.

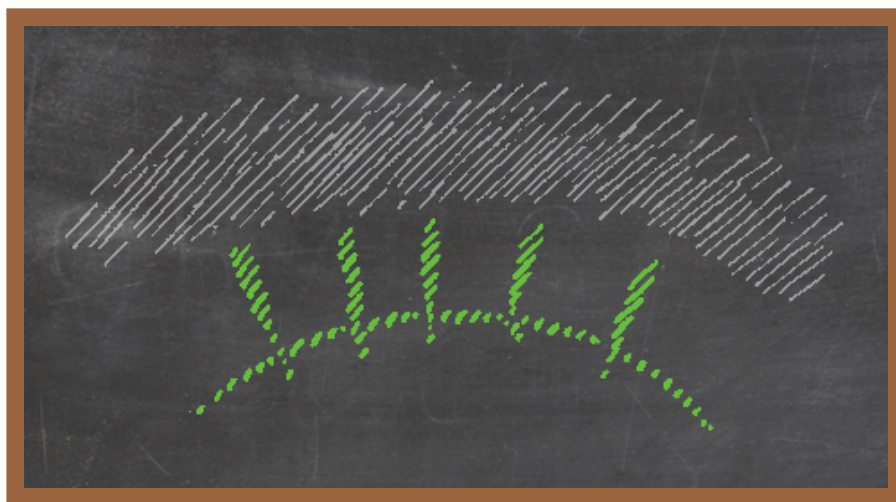


Figure 3

The people then had a subtle feeling awareness of what is developing there in the plant, of what lives in the plant. They had in the spring a general feeling of nature, of which an after-echo is still retained in our language. You will find in Goethe's *Faust* the expression "*es gruenelt*" (It is beginning to get green). Who notices nowadays when it is growing green, when the greenness rising up out of the Earth in the spring, wells and wafts through the air? Who notices when it grows green and when it blossoms? Well, of course people *see* it today; the red and the yellow of the flowers please them; but they do not notice that the air becomes quite different



when the flowers bloom, and again when the fruit is formed. Such living participation in the plant world no longer exists in our intellectualistic age, but it did exist for the people of ancient times.

Hence they were aware of it in their perceptive feeling when the "greening," blooming and fruiting came toward them — not now out of the Earth, but out of the surrounding atmosphere; when air and warmth themselves streamed down from above like something akin to plant nature (*shaded in drawing*). And when air and warmth became thus plant-like, the consciousness of those people was transported into that sphere in which the "I" then descended, as answer to what they had sent out into the cosmos in the form of music and poetry.

Thus the festivals had a wonderful, intimate, human content. This was a question to the divine-spiritual universe. Men received the answer because — just as we perceive the fruiting, the blossoming, the greening of the Earth today — they felt something plant-like streaming down from above out of the otherwise merely mineral air. In this way there entered into the dream of existence, into the ancient dreamy consciousness also the *dream of the ego*.

And when the St. John's festival was past and July and August came again, the people had the feeling "We have an ego, but this ego remains up there in heaven and speaks to us only at St. John's time. Then we become aware that we are connected with heaven. It has taken our ego into its protection. It shows it to us when it opens the great window of heaven at St. John's time. But we must ask about it. We must ask as we carry out the festival performances at St. John's time, as in these performances we find our way into the unbelievably close and intimate musical and poetic ceremonies." — Thus these ancient festivals already established a communication, a union, between the earthly and the heavenly.

You see this whole festival was immersed in the musical, in the musical-poetic. I might say that in the simple settlements of very ancient peoples, suddenly, for a few days at the height of summer, everything became poetic — although it had been thoroughly prepared beforehand by the Mysteries. The whole social life was plunged into this musical-poetic element. The people believed that they needed this for life during the course of the year, just as they needed daily food and drink; that they needed to enter into this mood of dancing, music and poetry, in order to establish their communication with the divine-spiritual powers of the cosmos. A relic of this festival remained in a later age, when a poet said, for example; "Sing, O Muse, of the wrath of Achilles, the son of Peleus," because he still remembered that once upon a time the great question was put before the deity, and the deity was expected to give answer to the question of men.

Just as these festivals at St. John's time were carefully prepared in order to pose the great question to the cosmos so that the cosmos might assure man at this time that he has an ego, which the heavens have taken into their protection, so likewise was prepared the festival at the time of the winter solstice, in the depths of winter, which has now become our Christmas festival. But while at St. John's time everything was

steeped in the musical-poetic, in the dance element, now in the depths of winter everything was first prepared in such a way that the people knew they must become still and quiet, that they must enter into a more contemplative element. And then there was brought forth — in these ancient times of which outer history provides no record, of which we can only know through spiritual science — all that during the summer had been in the forming and shaping and imaging elements which reached a climax in the festivals in music and dance. During that time these ancient people, who in a certain way went out of themselves in order to unite with the ego in the heavens, were not involved in learning anything. Besides the festival, they were occupied in doing what was necessary for their subsistence. Instruction waited for the winter months, and this reached its culmination, its festival expression, at the time of the winter solstice, in the depth of winter, at Christmas time.

Then began the preparation of the people, again under the guidance of pupils of the Mysteries, for various spiritual celebrations which were not performed during the summer. It is difficult to describe in modern terms what the people did from our September/October to our Christmas time, because everything was so very different from what is done now. But they were guided in what we would perhaps call riddle-solving, in answering questions that were put in a veiled form so that people had to discover a meaning in what was given in signs. Let us say that the Mystery-pupils gave to those who were learning in this way some kind of symbolic image, which they were to interpret. Or they gave what we would call a riddle to be solved, or some kind of incantation. What the magic saying contained, they were to apply to Nature, and thus divine its meaning.

But especially there was careful preparation for what later took on the most varied forms among the different peoples; for example, for what was known in northern countries at a later time as the throwing of the runic wands so that they formed shapes which were then deciphered. People devoted themselves to these activities in the depth of winter; but above all, those things were cultivated that then led to a certain art of modeling, in a primitive form of course.

Among these ancient forms of consciousness was a most singular one, paradoxical as it sounds to modern people, and it was as follows: With the coming of October, an urge for some sort of activity began to stir in people's limbs. In the summer a man had to accommodate the movements of his limbs to what the fields demanded of him; he had to put his hands to the plough; he had to adapt himself to the outer world. When the harvest had been gathered in, however, and his limbs were rested, then a need stirred in them for some other form of activity, and his limbs took on a longing to *knead*. Then people derived a special satisfaction from all kinds of plastic, moulding activity. We might say that just as an intensive urge had arisen at the time of the St. John's festival for dancing and music, so toward Christmas time an intensive urge arose to knead, to mould, to create, using any kind of pliant substance available in nature. People had an especially sensitive feeling, for example, for the way water begins to freeze. This gave them the specific impulse to push it in one direction and another, so that the ice-forms appearing in the water

took on certain shapes. Indeed people went so far as to keep their hands in the water while the shapes developed and their hands grew numb! In this way, when the water froze under the waves their hands cast up, it assumed the most remarkable artistic shapes, which of course again melted away.

Nothing remains of all this in the age of intellectualism except at most the custom of lead-casting on New Year's Eve, the Feast of St. Sylvester. In this, molten lead is poured into water, and one discovers that it takes on shapes whose meaning is then supposed to be guessed. But that is the last abstract remnant of those wonderful activities that arose from the impelling force in Nature experienced inwardly by the human being, which expressed itself for example as I have related: that a person thrust his hand into water which was in process of freezing, the hand then becoming numb as he tested how the water formed waves, so that the freezing water then "answered" with the most remarkable shapes. In this way the human being found the answers to his questions of the *Earth*. Through music and poetry at the height of summer, he turned toward the heavens with his questions, and they answered by sending ego-feeling into his dreaming consciousness. In the depth of winter he turned for what he wanted to know not now toward the heavens, but to the earthly, and he tested what kind of forms the earthly element can take on. In doing this he observed that the forms which emerged had a certain similarity to those developed by beetles and butterflies. This was the result of his contemplation. From the plastic, formative element that he drew out of the nature processes of the Earth, there arose in him the intuitive observation that the various animal forms are fashioned entirely out of the earthly element. At Christmas man understood the animal forms. And as he worked, as he exerted his limbs, even jumped into the water and made certain movements, then sprang out and observed how the solidifying water responded, he noticed in the outer world what sort of form he himself had as man. But this was only at Christmas time, not otherwise; at other times he had a perception only of the animal world and of what pertains to race. At Christmas time he advanced to the experience of the human form as well.

Just as in those times of the ancient Mysteries the ego-consciousness was mediated from the heavens, so the feeling for the human form was conveyed out of the Earth. At Christmas time man learned to know the Earth's form-force, its sculptural shaping force; and at St. John's time, at the height of summer he learned to know how the harmonies of the spheres let his ego sound into his dream-consciousness.

And thus at special festival seasons the ancient Mysteries expanded the being of man. On the one side the environment of the Earth extended out into the heavens, so that man might know how the heavens held his "I" in their protection, how his "I" rested there. And at Christmas time the Mystery teachers caused the Earth to give answer to the questioning of man by way of plastic forms, so that man gradually came to have an interest in the human form, in the flowing together of all animal forms into the human form. At midsummer man learned to know himself inwardly, in relation to his ego; in the depth of winter he learned to feel himself outwardly, in relation to his human form. And so it was that what man perceived as his being, how

he actually felt himself, was not acquired simply by being man, but by living together with the course of the year; that in order for him to come to ego-consciousness, the heavens opened their windows; that in order for him to come to consciousness of his human form, the Earth in a certain way unfolded her mysteries. Thus the human being was inwardly intimately linked with the course of the year, so intimately linked that he had to say to himself: "I know about what I am as man only when I don't live along stolidly, but when I allow myself to be lifted up to the heavens in summer, when I let myself sink down in winter into the Earth mysteries, into the secrets of the Earth."

You see from this that at one time the festival seasons with their celebrations were looked upon as an integral part of human life. A man felt that he was not only an earth-being but that his essential being belonged to the whole world, that he was a citizen of the entire cosmos. Indeed he felt himself so little to be an earth-being that he actually had first to be made aware of what he was through the Earth by means of festivals. And these festivals could be celebrated only at certain seasons because at other times the people who experienced the course of the year to some degree would have been quite unable to experience it at all. For all that the people could experience through the festivals was connected with the related seasons.

Mark you, after man has once achieved his freedom in the age of intellectualism, he can certainly not come again to this sharing in the life of the cosmos in the same way that he experienced it in primitive ages. But he can nevertheless come to it even with his modern constitution, if he applies himself once more to the spiritual.

We might say that in the ego consciousness which mankind has had for a long time now, something has been drawn in which could be attained only through the windows of heaven in summer. But just for that reason man must be learning to understand the cosmos, acquire for himself something else which in turn lies beyond the ego. It is natural today for people to speak of the human form in general. Those who have entered into the intellectual age no longer have a strong feeling for the animalistic-racial element. But just as this feeling formerly came over man, I should like to say as a force, as an impulse, which could be sought only out of the Earth, so today, through an understanding of the Earth which cannot be gained by means of geology or mineralogy but only once more in a spiritual way, man must come again to something more than the mere human form.

If we consider the human form we can say: In very ancient times man felt himself within this form in such a way that he felt only the external racial characteristics connected with the blood, but failed to perceive as far as the skin itself (*red in drawing*); he did not notice what formed his outline.

Today man has come so far that he does notice his outline, his bodily limits. He perceives his contour indeed as the typically human feature of his form (*blue*). Now, however, man must come out beyond himself; he must learn to know the etheric and astral elements outside himself. This he can do only through the deepening of spiritual science.



Figure 4

Thus we see that our present-day consciousness has been acquired at the cost of losing much of the former connection of our consciousness with the cosmos. But once man has come to experience his freedom and his world of thought, then he must emerge again and experience cosmically.

This is what Anthroposophy intends when it speaks of a renewal of the festivals, even of the creating of festivals like the Michael festival in autumn of which we have recently spoken. We must come once more to an inner understanding of what the cycle of the year can mean to man in this connection; it can then be something even loftier than it was for man long ago, as we have described it.



8 April 1923, Dornach

I should like to carry to a still wider horizon the reflections I have already made here concerning the relationship between man and the cycle of Nature which was formed in ancient times under the influence of the Mysteries, and to go into what was believed in those times with regard to all that one as man received from the cosmos through this cycle of Nature. You may have gathered from yesterday's lecture as well perhaps as from the recollection of much that I could still say about such matters during the past Christmas season, in the Goetheanum which has now been taken from us — you may have gathered that the cycle of the year in its phenomena was perceived, and indeed today can still be perceived, as a result of life, as something which in its external events is just as much the expression of a living being standing behind it as the actions of the human organism are the manifestations of a being, of the human soul itself.

Let us remind ourselves how, in midsummer, the time we know as St. John's, the people became aware under this ancient Mystery-influence of a certain relationship to their ego, an ego which they did not yet consider as exclusively their own, but which they viewed as resting still in the bosom of the divine-spiritual.

These people believed that by means of the ceremonies I have described, they approached their "I" at midsummer, although throughout the rest of the year it was hidden from them. Of course they thought of themselves as dwelling in their beings altogether in the bosom of the divine-spiritual; but they thought that during the other three-quarters of the year nothing was revealed to them of what belonged to them as their ego. Only in this one quarter, which reached its high point at St. John's, did the essential being of their own ego manifest itself to them as through a window opening out of the divine spiritual world.

Now this essence of the individual ego within the divine spiritual world in which it revealed itself was by no means regarded in such a neutral, indifferent — one may even say phlegmatic — way as is the case today. When the "I" is spoken of today, a person is hardly likely to think of it as having any special connection either with this world or any other. Rather, he thinks of his "I" as a kind of point; what he *does* rays out from it and what he *perceives* rays in. But the feeling a person has today in regard to his "I" is of an altogether phlegmatic nature. We cannot really say that modern man even feels the "egoity" of his "I" — in spite of the fact that it is his ego; for anyone who wants to be honest cannot really claim that he is fond of his "I." He is fond of his body; he is fond of his instincts; he may be fond of this or that experience. But the "I" is just a tiny word which is felt as a point in which all that has been indicated is more or less condensed. But in that period in which, after long preparations had been made, the approach to this "I" was undertaken ceremonially,

each man was enabled in a certain sense to meet his "I" in the universe. Following this meeting, then, the "I" was perceived to be once more gradually withdrawing and leaving the human being alone with his bodily and soul nature, or as we would say today, with his physical-etheric-astral being. In that period man felt the "I" perceptively as having a real connection with the entire cosmos, with the whole world.

But what was felt above all else with regard to the relationship of this "I" to the world was not something "naturalistic," to use the modern term; it was not something received as an external phenomenon. Rather, it was something which was deemed to be the very center of the most ancient moral conception of the world. Men did not expect great secrets of Nature to be revealed to them at this season. To be sure, such Nature secrets were spoken of, but man did not direct his attention primarily to them. Rather, he perceived through his feeling that above all he was to absorb into himself as moral impulse what is revealed at this time of midsummer when light and warmth reach their highest point.

This was the season man perceived as the time of divine-moral enlightenment. And what he wanted above all to obtain from the heavens as "answer" to the performances of music, poetry and dancing that were carried on at this season, what he waited for was that there should be revealed out of the heavens in all seriousness what they required of him morally.

And when all the ceremonies had been carried out that I described yesterday as belonging to the celebration of these festivals during the time of the sun's sultry heat — if it sometimes happened that a powerful storm broke forth with thunder and lightning, then just in this outbreak of thunder and lightning men felt the moral admonition of the heavens to earthly humanity.

There are vestiges from this ancient time in conceptions such as that of Zeus as the god of thunder, armed with a thunderbolt. Something similar is linked with the German god, Donar. This we have on one side. On the other side, man perceptively felt Nature, I might say, as warm, luminous, satisfied in itself. And he felt that this warming, luminous Nature as it was during the daytime remained also into the night time. Only he made a distinction, saying to himself: "During the day the air is filled with the warmth-element, with the light-element. In these elements of warmth and light there weave and live spiritual messengers through whom the higher divine beings want to make themselves known to men, want to endow them with moral impulses. But at night, when the higher spiritual beings withdraw, the messengers remain behind and reveal themselves in their own way."

And thus it was that especially at midsummer people perceived the ruling and weaving of Nature in the summer nights, in the summer evenings. And what they felt then seemed to them to be a kind of summer dream which they experienced in reality; a summer dream through which they came especially near to the divine-spiritual; a summer dream by which they were convinced that every phenomenon of

Nature was at the same time the moral utterance of the gods, but that all kinds of elemental beings were also active there who revealed themselves to men in their own way.

All the fanciful embellishment of the midsummer night's dream, of the St. John's night dream, is what remained later of the wondrous forms conjured by human imagination that wove through this midsummer time on the soul-spiritual level. This then, in all particulars, was taken to be a divine-spiritual moral revelation of the cosmos to man.

And so we may say that the conception underlying this was: at midsummer the divine-spiritual world revealed itself through moral impulses which were implanted in man as *Enlightenment* (see diagram). And what was felt in a quite special way at that time, what then worked upon man, was felt to be something super-human which played into the human order of things.



Figure 1



From his inner participation in the festivities celebrated in that time, man knew that he was lifted up above himself as he then was into the super-human, and that the Deity grasped the hand that man as it were reached toward him at this season. Everything that man believed to be divine-spiritual within him he ascribed to the revelations of this season of St. John's.

When the summer came to an end and autumn approached, when the leaves were withered and the seeds had ripened, when, that is, the full luxurious life of summer had faded and the trees become bare, then, because the insights of the Mysteries had flowed into all these perceptions, man felt: "The divine-spiritual world is withdrawing again from man." He notices how he is directed back to himself; he is in a certain sense growing out of the spiritual into Nature.

Thus man felt this "living-into" the autumn as a "living-out-from" the spiritual, as a living into Nature. The tree leaves became mineralized; the seeds dried up and mineralized. Everything inclined in a certain way towards the death of Nature's year.

In being thus interwoven with what was becoming mineral on the Earth and around the Earth, man felt that he himself was becoming woven together with Nature. For in that period man still stood closer in his inner experience to what was going on outside. And he also thought, he pondered in his mind about how he experienced his being woven-together with Nature. His whole thinking took on this character. If we want to express in our language today what man felt when autumn came, we should have to say the following — I beg you, however, to realize that I am using present-day words, and that in those days man would not have been able to speak thus, for then everything rested on perceptive feeling and was not characterized through thinking — but if we want to speak in modern terms we shall have to say: With his particular trend of thinking, with his feeling way of perceiving, the human being experienced the transition from summer to autumn in such a way that he found in it a passing from spirit-knowledge to Nature-knowledge (*see diagram*). Toward autumn man felt that he was no longer in a time of spirit-knowledge but that autumn required of him that he should learn to know Nature. Thus at the autumn equinox we have, *instead of moral impulse, knowledge of Nature, coming to know Nature.*

The human being began to reflect about Nature. At this time also he began to take into account the fact that he was a creature, a being within the cosmos. In that time it would have been considered folly to present Nature-knowledge in its existing form to man during the summer. The purpose of summer is to bring man into relation with the spiritual in the world. With the arrival of what we today call the Michaelmas season, people said to themselves: "By everything that man perceives about him in the woods, in the trees, in the plants, he is stimulated to pursue nature-knowledge." It was the season in which men were to occupy themselves above all with acquiring knowledge, with reflection. And indeed it was also the time when outer circumstances of life made this possible. Human life thus proceeded from *Enlightenment* to *Knowledge*. It was the right season for knowledge, for ever-increasing cognition.

When the pupils of the Mysteries received their instruction from the teachers, they were given certain mottoes of which we find adaptations in the maxims of the Greek sages. The "seven maxims" of the Seven Wise Men of Greece are, however, not actually those which originated in the primeval Mysteries.

In the very earliest Mysteries there was a saying associated with midsummer: "*Receive the Light*" (see diagram). By "Light," spiritual wisdom was meant. It designated that within which the human being's own "I" shone.

For autumn (*see diagram*), the motto imprinted in the Mysteries as an admonition pointing to what should be carried on by the souls was: "*Look around thee.*"

Now there approached the next development of the year, and with it, what man felt within himself to be connected of itself with this year. The season of winter approached. We come to midwinter (*see diagram*), which includes our Christmas time. Just as the human being in midsummer felt himself lifted out above himself to the divine-spiritual existence of the cosmos, so he felt himself in midwinter to be unfolding downward below himself. He felt as if the forces of the Earth were washing around him and carrying him along. He felt as though his will nature, his instincts and impulses were infiltrated and permeated by gravity, by the force of destruction and other forces that are in the Earth. In these ancient times people did not feel winter as we feel it, that it merely gets cold and we have to put on warm boots, for example, in order not to get chilled. Rather, a man of that ancient time felt what was coming up out of the Earth as something that united itself with his own being. In contrast to the sultry, light-filled element, he felt what came up then in winter as a frosty element. We feel the chilliness today, too, because it is connected with the corporeality; but ancient man felt within his soul as a phenomenon accompanying the cold: darkness and gloom. He felt somewhat as if all around him, wherever he went, darkness rose up out of the Earth and enveloped him in a kind of cloud — only up to the middle of his body, to be sure, but this is the way he felt.

And he said to himself — again I have to describe it in more modern words — man said to himself: "During the height of summer I stand face to face with Enlightenment; then the heavenly, the super-terrestrial streams down into the earthly world. But now the earthly is streaming upward." — Man already perceived and experienced something of the earthly during the autumnal equinox. But what he perceived and felt then of earthly nature was in conformity in a certain sense with his own nature; it was still connected with him. We might say: "At the time of the autumn equinox man felt in his *Gemuet*, in his realm of feeling, all that had to do with Nature. But now, in winter, he felt as though the Earth were laying claim to him, as if he were ensnared in his will nature by the forces of the Earth. He felt this to be the denial of the moral world order. He felt that together with the blackness that enveloped him like a cloud, forces opposed to the moral world order were ensnaring him. He felt the darkness rise up out of the Earth like a serpent and wind him about. But at the same time he was also aware of something quite different."

Already during autumn he had felt something stirring within him that we today call intellect. Whereas in summer the intellect evaporates and there enters from outside a *wisdom-filled moral element*, during autumn the intellect is consolidated. The human being approaches evil but his intellect consolidates. Man felt an actual serpent-like manifestation in midwinter, but at the same time the solidification, the strengthening of shrewdness, of the reflective element, of all that made him sly and cunning and incited him to follow the principle of utility in life. All this he was aware of in this way. And just as in autumn the knowledge of nature gradually emerged, so in midwinter the Temptation of Hell approached the human being, the *Temptation on the part of Evil*. Thus he was aware of this. So when we write here: "Moral impulse, Knowledge of Nature" (*see diagram*), here (*at midwinter*) we must write "Temptation through Evil."

This was just the time in which man had to develop what in any case was within him by way of Nature: everything associated with the intellect, slyness, cunning, all that was directed toward the utilitarian. This, man was to overcome through *Temperance* (Besonnenheit).<sup>[4]</sup> This was the season then in which man had to develop — not an open sense for wisdom, which in accordance with the ancient Mystery wisdom had been required of him during the time of Enlightenment, but something else. Just in that season in which evil revealed itself as we have indicated, man could experience in a fitting way resistance to evil: he was to become self-controlled (*besonnen* — *see preceding footnote*). Above all else at the season of change which he passed through in moving on from *Enlightenment* to *Cognition*, from *Knowledge of Spirit* to *Knowledge of Nature*, he was to progress from Nature knowledge to the contemplation of Evil (*see diagram, arrow on left*). This is the way it was understood.

And in giving instructions to the pupils of the Mysteries which could become mottoes, the teachers said to them — just as at midsummer they had said: "Receive the Light," and in autumn "Look around you" — now in midwinter it was said: "Beware of Evil." And it was expected that through "Temperance," through this guarding of oneself against evil, men would come to a kind of self-knowledge which would lead them to realize how they had deviated from the moral impulses in the course of the year.

Deviation from the moral impulses through the contemplation of evil, its overcoming through moderation — this was to come to man's consciousness just in the time following midwinter. Hence in this ancient wisdom all sorts of things were undertaken that induced men to atone for what they recognized as deviations from the moral impulses they had received through Enlightenment. With this, we approach spring, the spring equinox (*see diagram*).

And just as here (*see diagram: midsummer, autumn, midwinter*) we have Enlightenment, Cognition, Temperance, so for the *spring equinox* we have what was perceived as the activity of repentance. And in place of Cognition, and correspondingly, Temptation through Evil, there now entered something which we could call the Return — the reversion — to man's higher nature through Repentance.

Where we have written here (see *diagram: midsummer, autumn, winter*): Enlightenment, Cognition, Temperance, here we must write: *Return to Human Nature*.

If you look back once more to what was in the depths of winter the Temptation by Evil, you will have to say: At that time man felt as though he were lowered into the abysmal deeps of the Earth; he felt himself entrapped by Earth's darkness. Just as during the height of summer man was in a sense torn out of himself, his soul-nature being then lifted up above him, so now, in order not to be ensnared by Evil during the winter, his soul-being made itself inwardly *free*.

Through this there existed during the depths of winter, I might say a counter-image to what was present during the height of summer. At midsummer the phenomena of Nature spoke in a spiritual way. People sought especially in the thunder and the lightning for what the heavens had to say. They looked at the phenomena of Nature, but what they sought in these phenomena was a spiritual language. Even in small things, they sought at St. John's-tide the spiritual message of the elemental beings, but they looked for it outside themselves. They dreamed in a certain sense *outside* the human being. During the depths of winter, however, people sank into themselves and dreamed within their own being. To the extent that they tore themselves loose from the entanglement of the Earth, that is, whenever they could free their soul-element, they dreamed *within* their own being. Of this there has remained what is connected with the visions, with the inner beholding, of the Thirteen Nights following the winter solstice. Everywhere recollections have remained of these ancient times. You can look on the Norwegian Song of Olaf [Åsteson] <sup>[5]</sup> as a later development of what existed quite extensively in ancient times.

Then the springtime drew near. In our time the situation has shifted somewhat; in those days spring was closer to winter, and the whole year was viewed as being divided into three periods. Things were compressed. Nevertheless what I am sharing with you here was taught in its turn. Thus, just as at midsummer they said: "Receive the light;" and in autumn, at Michaelmas: "Look around you;" just as at midwinter, at the time that we celebrate Christmas, they said: "Beware of the Evil," so for the time of return they had a saying which was then thought to have effect only at this time: "*Know thyself*" — placing it in exact polarity to the Knowledge of Nature.

"Beware of the Evil" could also be expressed: "Beware, draw back from Earth's darkness." But this they did not say. Whereas during midsummer men accepted the external natural phenomenon of light as Wisdom, that is, at midsummer they spoke in a certain way in accordance with Nature, they would never have put the motto for winter into the sentence: "Beware of the darkness" — for they expressed rather the moral interpretation: "Beware of Evil."

Echoes of these festivals have persisted everywhere, so far as they have been understood. Naturally everything was changed when the great Event of Golgotha entered in.

It was in the season of the deepest human temptation, in winter, that the birth of Jesus occurred. The birth of Jesus took place in the very time when man was in the grip of the Earth powers, when he had plunged down, as it were, into the abysses of the Earth. Among the legends associated with the birth of Jesus, you will even find one which says that Jesus came into the world in a cave, thus hinting at something that was perceived as wisdom in the most ancient Mysteries, namely, that there the human being can find what he has to seek in spite of being held fast by the dark element of the Earth, which at the same time holds the reason for his falling prey to Evil.

It is in accord with all of this, too, that the time of Repentance is ascribed to the season when spring is approaching.

The understanding for the midsummer festival has quite naturally disappeared to a still greater extent than that for the other side of the year's course. For the more materialism overtook mankind, the less people felt themselves drawn to anything such as Enlightenment.

And what is of quite special importance to present-day humanity is precisely that time which leads on from Enlightenment, of which man still remains unconscious, toward the season of autumn. Here lies the point where man, who indeed has to enter into knowledge of nature, should grasp in the nature-knowledge a picture, a reflection, of a knowledge of divine spirits. For this there is no better festival of remembrance than Michaelmas.

If this is celebrated in the right way, it must follow that mankind everywhere will take hold of the question: How is spirit knowledge to be found in the glorified nature-knowledge of the present? How can man transform nature-knowledge so that out of what the human being possesses as the fruits of this nature-knowledge, spirit knowledge will arise? In other words, how is that to be overcome which, if it were to run its course on its own, would entrap man in the subhuman?

A turnaround must take place. The Michael festival must take on a particular meaning. This meaning emerges when one can perceive the following: Natural science has led man to recognize one side of world evolution, for example, that out of lower animal organisms higher more perfect ones have evolved in the course of time, right up to man; or, to take another example, that during the development of the embryo in the mother's body the human being passes through the animal forms one after the other. That, however, is only one side. The other side is what comes before our souls when we say to ourselves: "Man had to evolve out of his original divine-human beginning." If this (*see drawing*) indicates the original human condition (*lighter shading*), then man had to evolve out of it to his present state of unfoldment. First, he had gradually to push out of himself the lower animals, then, stage by stage what exists as higher animal forms. He overcame all this, separated it out, thrust it aside (*darker shading*). In this way he has come to what was originally predestined for him.

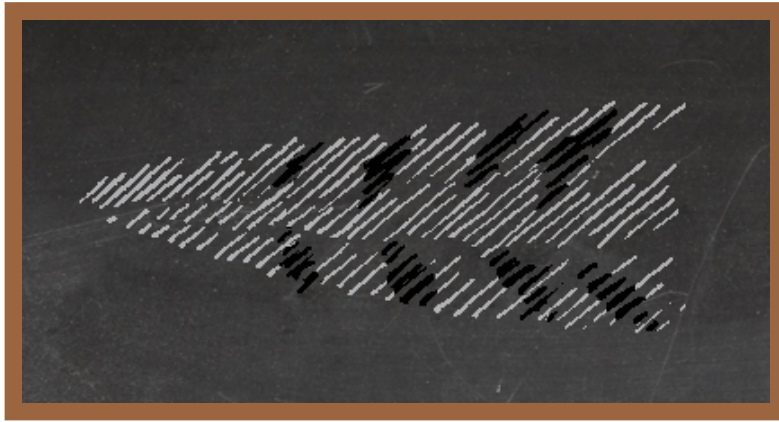


Figure 2

It is the same in his embryonic development. The human being rejects, each in its turn, everything that he is not to be. We do not, however, derive the real import of present-day nature-knowledge from this fact. What then is the import of modern nature-knowledge. It lies in the sentence: You behold in what nature-knowledge shows you that which you need to exclude from knowledge of man.

What does this imply? It implies that man must study natural science. Why? — When he looks into a microscope he knows what is not spirit. When he looks through a telescope into the far spaces of the universe, there is revealed to him what spirit is not. When he makes some sort of experiment in the physics or chemistry laboratory, what is not spirit is revealed to him. Everything that is not spirit is manifest to him in its pure form.

In ancient times when men beheld what is today nature, they still saw the spirit shining through it. Today we have to study nature in order to be able to say: "All that is *not* spirit." It is all winter wisdom. What pertains to summer wisdom must take a different form. In order that man may be spurred toward the spirit, may get an impulse toward the spirit, he must *learn to know* the unspiritual, the anti-spiritual. And man must be sensible of things that no one as yet admits today. For example, everyone says today: "If I have some sort of tiny living creature too small to be seen with the naked eye and I put it under a microscope, it will be enlarged for me so that I can see it." — Then, however, one must conceive: "This size is illusory. I have increased the size of the creature, and I no longer have it. I have a phantom. What I am seeing is not a reality. I have put a lie in place of the truth!" — This is of course madness from the present-day point of view, but it is precisely the truth.

If we will only realize that natural science is needed in order from this counter-image of the truth to receive the impulse toward the truth, then the force will be developed which can be symbolically indicated in the *overcoming of the Dragon by Michael*.

But something else is connected with this which already stands in the annals in what I might call a spiritual way. It stands there in such a form, however, that when man no longer had any true feeling for what lives in the year's changing seasons, he

related the whole thing instead to the human being. What leads to "Enlightenment" was replaced by the concept of "Wisdom" [called "Prudence" in English practice]; then what leads to "Knowledge" was replaced by the concept of "Courage" ["Fortitude"]; "Temperance" stayed the same (see diagram 1); and what corresponded to "Repentance" was replaced by the concept "Justice."

Here you have the four Platonic concepts of virtue: Wisdom [Prudence], Fortitude, Temperance, Justice. What man had formerly received from the life of the year in its course was now taken into man himself. It will come into consideration just in connection with the Michaelmas festival, however, that there will have to be a festival in honor of human courage, of the human manifestation of the courage of Michael. For what is it that holds man back today from spirit-knowledge? — Lack of soul courage, not to say soul cowardice. Man wants to receive everything passively, wants to set himself down in front of the world as if it were a movie, and wants to let the microscope and the telescope tell him everything. He does not want to temper the instrument of his own spirit, of his own soul, by activity. He does not care to be a follower of Michael. This requires inner courage. This inner courage must have its festival in Michaelmas. Then from the *Festival of Courage*, from the festival of the inwardly courageous human soul, there will ray out what will give the other festivals of the year also the right content.

We must in fact continue the path further; we must *take into human nature* what was formerly outside. Man is no longer in such a position that he could develop the knowledge of Nature only in autumn. It is already so that in man today things lie one within the other, for only in this way can he unfold his freedom. Yet it nevertheless holds true that the celebrating of festivals, I might say in a transformed sense, is again becoming necessary.

If the festivals were formerly *festivals of giving* by the divine to the earthly, if man at the festivals formerly received the gifts of the heavenly powers directly, so today, when man has his capacities within himself, the metamorphosis of the festival-thought consists in the festivals now being *festivals of remembrance or admonition*.  
[6] In them man inscribes into his soul what he is to consummate within himself.

And thus again it will be best to have as the most strongly working festival of admonition and remembrance this festival with which autumn begins, the Michaelmas festival, for at the same time all Nature is speaking in meaningful cosmic language. The trees are becoming bare; the leaves are withering. The creatures, which all summer long have fluttered through the air, as butterflies, or have filled the air with their hum, as beetles, begin to withdraw; many animals fall into their winter sleep. Everything becomes paralyzed. Nature, which through her own activity has helped man during spring and summer — Nature, which has worked in man during spring and summer, herself withdraws. Man is referred back to himself. What must now awaken when Nature forsakes him is *courage of soul*. Once more we are shown how what we can conceive as a Michael festival must be a festival of soul-courage, of soul-strength, of soul-activity.

This is what will gradually give to the festival thought the character of remembrance or admonition, qualities already suggested in a monumental saying by which it was indicated that for all future time what previously had been festivals of gifts will become, or should become, festivals of remembrance. These monumental words, which must be the basis of all festival thoughts, also for those which will arise again, — this monumental saying is: "This do in remembrance of Me." That is the festival thought which is turned toward the memory-aspect.

Just as the other thought that lies in the Christ-Impulse must work on livingly, must reform itself and not be allowed simply to remain as a dead product toward which we look back, so must *this* thought also work on further, kindling perceptive feeling and thought, and we must understand that the festivals must continue in spite of the fact that man is changing, but that because of this the festivals also must go through metamorphoses.





## Notes

1. △ This is the first occasion on which Rudolf Steiner spoke in a broader sense of the importance of celebrating Michaelmas today. His first allusion to the subject at all had been in a brief reference three months earlier. (*The Spiritual Communion of Mankind*, December 24, 1922)
2. △ The Gemüt, or feeling soul, together with the intellectual soul forms the centermost of the three soul elements in Rudolf Steiner's picture of man. This soul element was predominant in the fourth post-Atlantean epoch, in which the event of Golgotha took place.
3. △ It is assumed that *Anschauung* here is intended to describe the way man's *Gemuet* could inwardly experience the Entombment and Resurrection, as was indicated earlier. This would be perceptively, feelingly, rather than through logic.
4. △ The third of the cardinal or "Platonic" virtues, called in Greek *Sophrosyne*, in English, Temperance or moderation, in German is *Besonnenheit*. According to Steiner, *Besonnenheit* is "enfilling one's impulses with the degree of consciousness possible." "A man who rules his impulses through reflective thinking, feeling and perceiving is a man who is 'besonnen.'" (From *Das Raetsel des Menschen*, 6th August, 1916). See also *Spiritual Foundation of Morality* by Steiner.
5. △ Because of Rudolf Steiner's lectures referring to "The Dream Song of Olaf Åsteson" (December 26, 1911 and January 7, 1913), this unique poem of initiation experience has been translated into English.

The Dream Song of Olaf Åsteson [on the RSArchive](#) or [in PDF](#).

6. △ *Feste der Erinnerungen* (a plural form). *Erinnerung* has two shades of meaning. One is "recollection" or "remembrance"; the other "admonition" or "reminder." Both elements seem to apply in this passage.



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