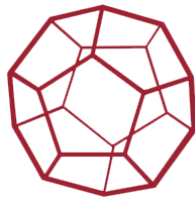


The Occult Significance of the Bhagavad Gita

GA 146



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by

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Preface

Steiner reveals the results of his spiritual scientific research into the Bhagavad Gita. With extensive details and insights he shows how the inner path inspired by the lofty Krishna was balanced and completed by what Christ brought to humanity.



Lecture 1

May 28, 1913

IT IS MORE than a year since I was able to speak here about those things that lie so deeply on our hearts, those things that we believe must enter more and more into human knowledge because, from our time onward, the human soul will feel increasingly that these things belong to its requirements, to its deepest longings. And it is with great pleasure that I greet you here in this place for the second time, along with all those who have traveled here in order to show in your midst how their hearts and souls are dedicated to our sacred work the whole world over.

When I was able to speak to you here last time we let our spiritual gaze journey far into the wide regions of the universe. This time it will be our task to stay more in the regions of earthly evolution. Our thoughts, however, will penetrate to regions that will lead us nonetheless to the portals of the eternal manifestation of the spiritual in the world. We shall speak about a subject that will apparently lead us far away in time and in space from the here and now. It will not on that account lead us less to what lives in the here and now, but rather to what lives just as much in all times and in all the places of the earth because it will bring us near to the secrets of the eternal in all existence. It will lead us to the ceaseless search of man for the wells of eternity where he may drink for the healing and refreshment of something in him which, ever since they gained understanding of it, men have considered all-powerful in life, namely, *love*. For wherever we are gathered together we are gathered in the name of the search for wisdom and the search for love. What we seek is extended out into space and can be observed in the far horizon of the Cosmic All, but it can also be observed in the wrestling soul of man wherever he may be. It meets us especially when we turn our gaze to one of those mighty manifestations of the wrestling spirit of man such as are given us in some great work like the one that is to form the basis of our present studies.

We are going to speak of one of the greatest and most penetrating manifestations of the human spirit — the *Bhagavad Gita*, which, ancient as it is, yet in its foundations comes before us with renewed significance at the present time. A short time ago the peoples of Europe and those of the West generally, knew little of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Only during the last

century has the fame of this wonderful poem extended to the West. Only lately have Western peoples become familiar with this marvelous song. But these lectures of ours will show that a real and deep knowledge of this poem, as against mere familiarity with it, can only come when its occult foundations are more and more revealed. For what meets us in the *Bhagavad Gita* sprang from an age of which we have often spoken in connection with our anthroposophical studies. The mighty sentiments, feelings and ideas it contains had their origin in an age that was still illumined by what was communicated through the old human clairvoyance. One who tries to feel what this poem breathes forth page by page as it speaks to us, will experience, page by page, something like a breath of the ancient clairvoyance humanity possessed.

The Western world's first acquaintance with this poem came in an age in which there was little understanding for the original clairvoyant sources from which it sprang. Nevertheless, this lofty song of the Divine struck like a wonderful flash of lightning into the Western world, so that a man of Central Europe, when he first became acquainted with this Eastern song, said that he must frankly consider himself happy to have lived in a time when he could become acquainted with the wondrous things expressed in it. This man was not one who was unacquainted with the spiritual life of humanity through the centuries, indeed through thousands of years. He was one who looked deeply into spiritual life — Wilhelm von Humboldt, the brother of the celebrated astronomer. Other members of Western civilization, men of widely different tongues, have felt the same. What a wonderful feeling it produces in us when we let this *Bhagavad Gita* work upon us, even in its opening verses!

It seems that in our circle, my dear friends, perhaps particularly in our circle, we often have to begin by working our way through to a fully unprejudiced position. For in spite of the fact that the *Bhagavad Gita* has been known for so short a time in the West, yet its holiness has so taken our hearts by storm, so to say, that we are inclined to approach it from the start with this feeling of holiness without making it clear to ourselves what the starting-point of the poem really is. Let us for once place this before us quite dispassionately, perhaps even a little grotesquely.

A poem is here before us that from the very first sets us in the midst of a wild and stormy battle. We are introduced to a scene of action that is hardly less wild than that into which Homer straightway places us in the *Iliad*. We go further and are confronted in this scene with something which Arjuna — one of the foremost, perhaps the foremost of the personalities in

the Song — feels from the start to be a fratricidal conflict. He comes before us as one who is horror-stricken by the battle, for he sees there among the enemy his own blood relations. His bow falls from his grasp when it becomes clear to him that he is to enter a murderous strife with men who are descended from the same ancestors as himself, men in whose veins flows the same blood as his own. We almost begin to sympathize with him when he drops his bow and recoils before the awful battle between brothers.

Then before our gaze arises Krishna, the great spiritual teacher of Arjuna, and a wonderful, sublime teaching is brought before us in vivid colors in such a way that it appears as a teaching given to his pupil. But to what is all this leading? That is the question we must first of all set before us, because it is not enough just to give ourselves up to the holy teaching in the words of Krishna to Arjuna. The circumstances of its giving must also be studied. We must visualize the situation in which Krishna exhorts Arjuna not to quail before this battle with his brothers but take up his bow and hurl himself with all his might into the devastating conflict. Krishna's teachings emerge amid the battle like a cloud of spiritual light that at first is incomprehensible, and they require Arjuna not to recoil but to stand firm and do his duty in it. When we bring this picture before our eyes it is almost as though the teaching becomes transformed by its setting. Then again this setting leads us further into the, whole weaving of the *Song of the Mahabharata*, the mighty song of which the *Bhagavad Gita* is only a part.

The teaching of Krishna leads us out into the storms of everyday life, into the wild confusion of human battles, errors and earthly strife. His teaching appears almost like a justification of these human conflicts. If we bring this picture before us quite dispassionately, perhaps the *Bhagavad Gita* will suggest to us altogether different questions from those that arise when — imagining we can understand them — we alight upon something similar to what we are accustomed to find in ordinary works of literature. So it is perhaps necessary to point first to this *setting* of the *Gita* in order to realize its world-historic significance, and then be able to see how it can be of increasing and special significance in our own time.

I have already said that this majestic song came into the Western world as something completely new, and almost equally new were the feelings, perceptions and thoughts that lie behind it. For what did Western civilization really know of Eastern culture before it became acquainted with the *Bhagavad Gita*? Apart from various things that have only become

known in this last century, very little indeed! If we accept certain movements that remained secret, Western civilization has had no direct knowledge of what is actually the central nerve impulse of the whole of this great poem. When we approach such a thing we feel how little human language, philosophy, ideas, serving for everyday life, are sufficient for it; how little they suffice for describing such heights of the spiritual life of man upon earth. We need something quite different from ordinary descriptions to give expression to what shines out to us from such a revelation of the spirit of man.

I should like first to place two pictures before you so you may have a foundation for further descriptions. The one is taken from the book itself, the other from the spiritual life of the West. This can be comparatively easily understood, whereas the one from the book appears for the moment quite remote. Beginning then with the latter, we are told how, in the midst of the battle, Krishna appears and unveils before Arjuna cosmic secrets, great immense teachings. Then his pupil is overcome by the strong desire to see the form, the spiritual form of this soul, to have knowledge of him who is speaking such sublime things. He begs Krishna to show himself to him in such manner as he can in his true spirit form. Then Krishna appears to him (later we shall return to this description) in his form — a form that embraces all things, a great, sublime, glorious beauty, a nobility that reveals cosmic mysteries. We shall see there is little in the world to approach the glory of this description of how the sublime spirit form of the teacher is revealed to the clairvoyant eye of his pupil.

Before Arjuna's gaze lies the wild battlefield where much blood will have to flow and where the fratricidal struggle is to develop. The soul of Krishna's disciple is to be wafted away from this battlefield of devastation. It is to perceive and plunge into a world where Krishna lives in his true form. That is a world of holiest blessedness, withdrawn from all strife and conflict, a world where the secrets of existence are unveiled, far removed from everyday affairs. Yet to that world man's soul belongs in its most inward, most essential being. The soul is now to have knowledge of it. Then it will have the possibility of descending again and re-entering the confused and devastating battles of this our world. In truth, as we follow the description of this picture we may ask ourselves what is really taking place in Arjuna's soul? It is as though the raging battle in which it stands were forced upon it because this soul feels itself related to a heavenly world in which there is no human suffering, no battle, no death. It longs to rise into a world of the eternal, but with the inevitable force that can come only from the impulse of so sublime a being as Krishna, this soul must be

forced downward into the chaotic confusion of the battle. Arjuna would gladly turn away from all this chaos, for the life of earth around him appears as something strange and far away, altogether unrelated to his soul. We can distinctly feel this soul is still one of those who long for the higher worlds, who would live with the Gods, and who feel human life as something foreign and incomprehensible to them. In truth a wondrous picture, containing things of sublime import!

A hero, Arjuna, surrounded by other heroes and by the warrior hosts — a hero who feels all that is spread before him as unfamiliar and remote — and a God, Krishna, who is needed to direct him to this world. He does not understand this world until Krishna makes it comprehensible to him. It may sound paradoxical, but I know that those who can enter into the matter more deeply will understand me when I say that Arjuna stands there like a human soul to whom the earthly side of the world has first to be made comprehensible.

Now this *Bhagavad Gita* comes to men of the West who undoubtedly *have* an understanding for earthly things! It comes to men who have attained such a high degree of materialistic civilization that they have a very good understanding for all that is earthly. It has to be understood by souls who are separated by a deep gulf from all that a genuine observation shows Arjuna's soul to be. All that to which Arjuna shows no inclination, needing Krishna to tame him down to earthly things, seems to the Westerner quite intelligible and obvious. The difficulty for him lies rather in being able to lift himself up to Arjuna, to whom has to be imparted an understanding of what is well understood in the West, the sense matters of earthly life. A God, Krishna, must make our civilization and culture intelligible to Arjuna. How easy it is in our time for a person to understand what surrounds him! He needs no Krishna. It is well for once to see clearly the mighty gulfs that can lie between different human natures, and not to think it too easy for a Western soul to understand a nature like that of Krishna or Arjuna. Arjuna is a man, but utterly different from those who have slowly and gradually evolved in Western civilization.

That is one picture I wanted to bring you, for words cannot lead us more than a very little way into these things. Pictures that we can grasp with our souls can do better because they speak not only to understanding but to that in us which on earth will always be deeper than our understanding — to our power of perception and to our feeling. Now I would like to place another picture before you, one not less sublime than that from the *Bhagavad Gita* but that stands infinitely nearer to Western culture. Here in

the West we have a beautiful, poetic picture that Western man knows and that means much for him. But first let us ask, to what extent does Western mankind really believe that this being of Krishna once appeared before Arjuna and spoke those words? We are now at the starting-point of a concept of the world that will lead us on until this is no mere matter of belief, but of knowledge. We are however only at the beginning of this anthroposophical concept of the world that will lead us to knowledge. The second picture is much nearer to us. It contains something to which Western civilization can respond.

We look back some five centuries before the founding of Christianity to a soul whom one of the greatest spirits of Western lands made the central figure of all his thought and writing. We look back to Socrates. We look to him in the spirit in the hour of his death, even as Plato describes him in the circle of his disciples in the famous discourse on the immortality of the soul. In this picture there are but slight indications of the beyond, represented in the "daimon" who speaks to Socrates.

Now let him stand before us in the hours that preceded his entrance into the spiritual worlds. There he is, surrounded by his disciples, and in the face of death he speaks to them of the immortality of the soul. Many people read this wonderful discourse that Plato has given us in order to describe the scene of his dying teacher. But people in these days read only words, only concepts and ideas. There are even those — I do not mean to censure them — in whom this wonderful scene of Plato arouses questions as to the logical justification of what the dying Socrates sets forth to his disciples. They cannot feel there is something more for the human soul, that something more important lives there, of far greater significance than logical proofs and scientific arguments. Let us imagine all that Socrates says on immortality to be spoken by a man of great culture, depth and refinement, in the circle of his pupils, but in a different situation from that of Socrates, under different circumstances. Even if the words of this man were a hundred times more logically sound than those of Socrates, in spite of all they will perhaps have a hundred times less value. This will only be fully grasped when people begin to understand that there is something for the human soul of more value, even if less plausible, than the most strictly correct logical demonstrations. If any highly educated and cultured man speaks to his pupils on the immortality of the soul, it can indeed have significance. But its significance is not revealed in what he says — I know I am now saying something paradoxical but it is true — its significance depends also on the fact that the teacher, having spoken these words to his pupils, passes on to look after the ordinary affairs of life, and his pupils

do the same. But Socrates speaks in the hour that immediately precedes his passage through the gates of death. He gives out his teaching in a moment when in the next instant his soul is to be severed from his bodily form.

It is one thing to speak about immortality to the pupils he is leaving behind in the hour of his own death — which does not meet him unexpectedly but as an event predetermined by destiny — and another thing to return after such a discourse to the ordinary business of living. It is not the words of Socrates that should work on us as much as the situation under which he speaks them. Let us take all the power of this scene, all that we receive from Socrates' conversation with his pupils on immortality, the full immediate force of this picture. What do we have before us? It is the world of everyday life in Greek times; the world whose conflicts and struggles led to the result that the best of the country's sons was condemned to drink the hemlock. This noble Greek spoke these last words with the sole intention of bringing the souls of the men around him to believe in what they could no longer have knowledge; believe in what was for them "a beyond," a spiritual world. That it needs a Socrates to lead the earthly souls until they gain an outlook into the spiritual worlds, that it needs him to do this by means of the strongest proofs, that is, by his *deed*, is something that is indeed comprehensible to Western souls. They can gain an understanding for the Socratic culture. We only grasp Western civilization in a right sense when we recognize that in this respect it has been a Socratic civilization throughout the centuries.

Now let us think of one of the pupils of Socrates who could certainly have no doubt of the reality of all that surrounded him, being a Greek, and compare him with Krishna's disciple Arjuna. Think how the Greek has to be introduced to the super-sensible world, and then think of Arjuna who can have no doubt whatever about it but becomes confused instead with the sense-world, almost doubting the possibility of its existence. I know that history, philosophy and other branches of knowledge may say with apparently good reason, "Yes, but if you will only look at what is written in the *Bhagavad Gita*, and in Plato's works, it is just as easy to prove the opposite of what you have just said." I know too that those who speak like this do not want to feel the deeper impulses, the mighty impulses that arise on the one hand from that picture out of the *Bhagavad Gita*, and on the other from that of the dying Socrates as described by Plato. A deep gulf yawns between these two worlds In spite of all the similarity that can be discovered. This is because the *Bhagavad Gita* marks the end of the age of the ancient clairvoyance. There we can catch the last echo of it; while in

the dying Socrates we meet one of the first of those who through thousands of years have wrestled with another kind of human knowledge, with those ideas, thoughts and feelings that, so to say, were thrown off by the old clairvoyance and have continued to evolve in the intervening time, because they have to prepare the way for a new clairvoyance. Today we are striving toward this new clairvoyance by giving out and receiving what we call the anthroposophical conception of the world. From a certain aspect we may say that no gulf is deeper than the one that opens between Arjuna and a disciple of Socrates.

Now we are living in a time when the souls of men, having gone through manifold transformations and incarnations in the search for life in external knowledge, are now once more seeking to make connection with the spiritual worlds. The fact that you are sitting here is most living proof that your own souls are seeking this reunion. You are seeking the connection that will lead you up in a new way to those worlds so wondrously revealed to us in the words of Krishna to his disciple Arjuna. So there is much in the occult wisdom on which the *Bhagavad Gita* is founded that resounds to us as something responding to our deepest longings. In ancient times the soul was well aware of the bond that unites it with the spiritual. It was at home in the super-sensible. We now are at the beginning of an age wherein men's souls will once more seek access in a new way to the spiritual worlds. We must feel ourselves stimulated to this search when we think of how we once had this access that it once was there for man. Indeed, we shall find it to an unusual degree in the revelations of the holy song of the East.

As is generally the case with the great works of man, we find the opening words of the *Bhagavad Gita* full of meaning. (Are not the opening words of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* most significant?) The story is told by his charioteer to the blind king, the chief of the Kurus who are engaged in fratricidal battle with the Pandavas. A blind chieftain! This already seems symbolical. Men of ancient times had vision into the spiritual worlds. With their whole heart and soul they lived in connection with Gods and Divine Beings. Everything that surrounded them in the earthly sphere was to them in unceasing connection with divine existence. Then came another age, and just as Greek legend depicts Homer as a blind man, so the *Gita* tells us of the blind chief of the Kurus. It is to him that the discourses of Krishna are narrated in which he instructs Arjuna concerning what goes on in the world of the senses. He must even be told of those things of the sense-world that are projections into it from the spiritual. There is a deeply significant symbol in the fact that old men who looked back with perfect

memory and a perfect spiritual connection into a primeval past, were *blind* to the world immediately around them. They were seers in the spirit, seers in the soul. They could experience as though in lofty pictures all that lived as spiritual mysteries. Those who were to understand the events of the world in their spiritual connections were pictured to us in the old songs and legends as blind. Thus we find this same symbol in the Greek singer Homer as in that figure that meets us at the beginning of the *Bhagavad Gita*. This introduces us to the age of transition from primeval humanity to that of the present day.

Now why is Arjuna so deeply moved by the impending battle of the brothers? We know that the old clairvoyance was in a sense bound up with external blood relationship. The flowing of the same blood in the veins of a number of people was rightly looked upon as something sacred in ancient times because with it was connected the ancient perception of a particular group-soul. Those who not only felt but knew their blood-relationship to one another did not yet have such an ego as lives in men of the present time. Wherever we look in those ancient times we find everywhere groups of people who did not at all feel themselves as having an individual "I" as man does today. Each felt his identity only *in the group*, in a community based upon the blood-bond.

What does the folk-soul, the nation-soul, signify to a man today? Certainly it is often an object of the greatest enthusiasm. Yet we may say that, compared with the individual "I" of a man, this nation-soul does not really count. This may be a hard saying but it is true. Once upon a time man did not say "I" to *himself* but to his tribal or racial *group*. This group-soul feeling was still living in Arjuna when he saw the fratricidal battle raging around him. That is the reason why the battle that raged about him filled him with such horror.

Let us enter the soul of Arjuna and feel the horror that lived in him when he realized how those who belonged together are about to murder each other. He felt what lived in all the souls at that time *and is about to kill itself*. He felt as a soul would feel if its body, which is its very own, were being torn in pieces. He felt as though the members of one body were in conflict, the heart with the head, the left hand with the right. Think how Arjuna's soul confronted the impending battle as a battle against its own body, when, in the moment he drops his bow, the conflict of the kinsmen seems to him a conflict between a man's right hand and his left. Then you will feel the atmosphere of the opening verses of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

When Arjuna is in this mood he is met by the great teacher Krishna. Here we must call attention to the incomparable art with which Krishna is pictured in this scene: The holy God, who stands there teaching Arjuna what man shall and will discard if he would take the right direction in his evolution. Of what does Krishna speak? Of *I*, and *I*, and *I*, and always only of *I*. "I am in the earth, I am in the water, I am in the air, I am in the fire, in all souls, in all manifestations of life, even in the holy Aum. I am the wind that blows through the forests. I am the greatest of the mountains, of the rivers. I am the greatest among men. I am all that is best in the old seer Kapila." Truly Krishna says nothing less than this, "I recognize nothing else than myself, and I admit the world's existence only in so far as it is *I*!" Nothing else than *I* speaks from out the teaching of Krishna.

Let us once [and] for all see quite plainly how Arjuna stands there as one not yet understanding himself as an ego but who now has to do so. How the God confronts him like an all-embracing cosmic egoist, admitting of nothing but himself, even requiring others to admit of nothing but themselves, each one an "I." Yes, in all that is in earth, water, fire or air, in all that lives upon the earth, in the three worlds, we are to see nothing but Krishna.

It is full of significance for us that one who cannot yet grasp the ego is brought for his instruction before a Being who demands to be recognized only as his own Self. Let him who wants to see this in the light of truth read the *Bhagavad Gita* through and try to answer the question, "How can we designate what Krishna says of himself and for which he demands recognition?" It is *universal egoism* that speaks in Krishna. It does indeed seem to us as though through the whole of the sublime *Gita* this refrain resounds to our spiritual hearing, "Only when you recognize, you men, my all-embracing egoism, only then can salvation be for you!"

The greatest achievements of human spiritual life always set us riddles. We only see them in the right light when we recognize that they set us the very greatest riddles. Truly, a hard one seems to be given us when we are now confronted with the task of understanding how a most sublime teaching can be bound up with the announcement of universal egoism. It is not through logic but in the perception of the great contradictions in life that the occult mysteries unveil themselves to us. It will be our task to get beyond what seems so strange and come to the truth within the Maya.

When we are speaking within Maya we must recognize what it really is that we may rightly call a universal egoism. Through this very riddle we must reach out from illusion into reality, into the light of truth. How this is possible, and how we may surmount this riddle and reach reality, will form the subject of the following lectures.



Lecture 2

May 29, 1913

THE MORE deeply we penetrate into the occult records of the various ages and peoples, that is to say, into the truly occult records, the more we are struck by one feature of them which meets us again and again. I have already indicated it in discussing the Gospel of St. John, and again on a later occasion in speaking of the Gospel of St. Mark. I refer to the fact that on looking deeply into any such occult record it becomes ever clearer that it is really most wonderfully composed, that it forms an artistic whole. I could show, for instance, how St. John's Gospel, when we penetrate into its depths, reveals a wonderful, artistic composition. With remarkable dramatic power the story is carried up stage by stage to a great climax, and then continues from this point onward with a kind of renewal of dramatic power to the end. You can study this in the lectures I gave at Cassel on St. John's Gospel in relation to the three other Gospels, especially to that according to St. Luke.

Most impressive is the gradual enhancement of the whole composition while the super-sensible is placed before us in the so-called miracles and signs; each working up in ever-increasing wonder to the sign that meets us in the initiation of Lazarus. It makes us realize how we can always find artistic beauty at the foundation of these occult records. I could show the same for the structure of St. Mark's Gospel. When we regard such records in their beauty of form and their dramatic power, we can indeed conclude that just because they are *true* such records cannot be other than artistically, beautifully composed, in the deepest sense of the word. For the moment we will only indicate this fact, as we may come back to it in the course of these lectures.

Now it is remarkable that the same thing meets us again in the *Bhagavad Gita*. There is a wonderful intensification of the narrative, one might say, a hidden artistic beauty in the song, so that if nothing else were to touch the soul of one studying this sublime *Gita*, he still could not help being impressed by its marvelous composition. Let us begin by indicating a few of the outstanding points — and we will confine ourselves today to the first four discourses — because these points are important both for the artistic structure and the deep occult truths that it contains.

First of all Arjuna meets us. Facing the bloodshed in which he is to take part, he grows weak. He sees all that is to take place as a battle of brothers against brothers, his blood relations. He shrinks back. He will not fight against them. While fear and terror come over him and he is horror-stricken, his charioteer suddenly appears as the instrument through which Krishna, God, is to speak to him. Here in this first episode we already have a moment of great intensity and also an indication of deep occult truth. Anyone who finds the way, by whatever path, into the spiritual worlds, even though he may have gone only a few steps — or even had only a dim presentiment of the way to be experienced — such a person will be aware of the deep significance of this moment.

As a rule we cannot enter the spiritual worlds without passing through a deep upheaval in our souls. We have to experience something which disturbs and shakes all our forces, filling us with intense feeling. Emotions that are generally spread out over many moments, over long periods of living, whose permanent effect on the soul is therefore weaker — such feelings are concentrated in a single moment and storm through us with tremendous force when we enter the occult worlds. Then we experience a kind of inner shattering, which can indeed be compared to fear, terror and anxiety, as though we were shrinking back from something almost with horror. Such experiences belong to the initial stages of occult development, to entering the spiritual worlds. It is just for this reason that such great care must be taken to give the right advice to those who would enter the spiritual worlds through occult training. Such a person must be prepared so that he may experience this upheaval as a necessary event in his soul life without its encroaching on his bodily life and health, because his body must not suffer a like upheaval. That is the essential thing. We must learn to suffer the convulsions of our soul with outward equanimity and calm.

This is true not only for our bodily processes. The soul forces we need for everyday living, our ordinary intellectual powers, even those of imagination, of feeling and will — these too must not be allowed to become unbalanced. The upheaval that may be the starting-point for occult life must take place in far deeper layers of the soul, so that we go through our external life as before, without anything being noticed in us outwardly, while within we may be living through whole worlds of shattering soul-experience. That is what it means to be ripe for occult development: To be able to experience such inward convulsions without losing one's outer balance and calm. To this end a person who is striving to become ripe for occult development must widen the circle of his interests beyond his

everyday life. He must get away from that to which he is ordinarily attached from morning to night, and reach out to interests that move on the great horizon of the world.

We must be able to undergo the experience of doubting all truth and all knowledge. We must have the power to do this with the same intensity of feeling people generally have only where their everyday interests are concerned. We must be able to *feel with* the destiny of all mankind, with as much interest as we usually feel in our own destiny, or perhaps in that of our nearest connections of family, nation, or race. If we cannot do this, we are not yet completely ready for occult development.

For this reason modern anthroposophy, if pursued earnestly and worthily, is the right preparation in our age for a true occult development. Let those who are absorbed in the petty material interests of the immediate present, who cannot find sufficient interest to follow the anthroposophist in looking out over world and planetary destinies, over the historical epochs and races of mankind — let them scoff if they will! One who would prepare himself for an occult development must lift up his eyes to the heights where the interests of mankind, of the earth, of the whole planetary system become his own. When a person's interests are gradually sharpened and widened through the study of anthroposophy, which leads even without occult training to an understanding of occult truths, then he is being rightly prepared for an occult path.

In our time there are many who have such interests for the whole of mankind. More often they are not to be found among the intellectuals but are people who appear to lead quite simple lives. Yes, there are many today who have a humble place in life and as if by natural instinct feel this interest in the whole of mankind. That is why anthroposophy is in such harmony with the spirit of our age.

First, then, we must learn of the mighty upheaval of the soul that has to come at the beginning of occult experience. With wonderful truth the *Bhagavad Gita* sets such a moment of upheaval at the starting-point of Arjuna's experience, only he does not go through an occult training but is placed into this moment by his destiny. He is placed into the battle without being able to recognize its necessity, its purpose, or its aim. All he sees is that blood relations are about to fight against each other. Such a soul as Arjuna can be shaken by that to its innermost core, for he has to say to himself, "Brother fights against brother. Surely then all the tribal customs will be shaken and then the tribe itself will wither away and be destroyed,

and all its morality fall into decay! Those laws will be shaken that in accordance with an eternal destiny place men into castes; and then will everything be imperiled — man himself, the law, the whole world. The whole significance of mankind will be in the balance." Such is his feeling. It is as though the ground were about to sink from under his feet, as though an abyss were opening up before him.

Arjuna was a man who had received into his feeling something that the man of today no longer knows, but that in those ancient times was a primeval teaching of tradition. He knew that what is handed on from generation to generation in mankind is bound up with *the woman nature*; while the individual, personal qualities whereby a man stands out from his blood connections and his family line are bound up with *the man nature*. What a man inherits as common, generic qualities is handed on to the descendants by the woman, whereas what forms him into a unique, individual being, tearing him out of the generic succession, is the part he receives from his father. "Must it not then have an evil effect on the laws that rule woman's nature," says Arjuna to himself, "if blood fights against blood?"

There is another feeling that Arjuna has absorbed, on which for him the whole well-being of human evolution depends. He feels that the forefathers of the tribe, the ancestors, are worthy of honor. He feels that their souls watch over the succeeding generations. For him it is a sublime service to offer up fires of sacrifice to the Manes, to the holy souls of the ancestors. But now what must he see? Instead of altars with sacrificial fires burning on them for the ancestors, he sees those who should join in kindling such fires assailing one another in battle. If we would understand a human soul we must penetrate into its thoughts. Above all we must enter deeply into its feelings because it is in feeling that the soul is intimately bound up with its very life. Now think of the great contrast between all that Arjuna would naturally feel, and the bloody battle of brother against brother that is actually about to take place. Destiny is hammering at Arjuna's soul, shaking it to its very depths. It is as though he had to gaze down into a terrible abyss. Such an upheaval awakens the forces of the soul and brings it to a vision of occult realities that at other times are hidden as behind a veil. That is what gives such dramatic intensity to the *Bhagavad Gita*. The ensuing discourse is thus placed before us with wonderful power, as developing of necessity out of Arjuna's destiny, instead of being given us merely as an academic, pedantic course of instruction in occultism.

Now that Arjuna has been rightly prepared for the birth of the deeper forces of his soul, now that he can see these forces in inward vision, there happens what everyone who has the power to behold it will understand: His charioteer becomes the instrument through which the god Krishna speaks to him. In the first four discourses we observe three successive stages, each higher than the last, each one introducing something new. Here in these very first discourses we find an accent that is wonderful in its dramatic art, apart from the fact that it corresponds to a deep occult truth. The first stage is a teaching that might appear even trivial to many Westerners in its given form. Let us admit that at once. (Here I should like to remark, especially for the benefit of my dear friends here in Finland, that I mean by "Western" all that lies to the west of the Ural Mountains, the Volga, the Caspian Sea and Asia Minor — in fact the whole of Europe. What is to be called Eastern land belongs essentially in Asia. Of course, America too forms part of the West.)

To begin with then we find a teaching that might easily appear trivial, especially to a philosophical mind. For what is the first thing that Krishna says to Arjuna as a word of exhortation for the battle? "Look there," he says, "at those who are to be killed by you; those in your own ranks who are to be killed and those who are to remain behind, and consider well this one thing. What dies and what remains alive in your ranks and in those of the enemy is but the outer physical body. The spirit is eternal. If your warriors slay those in the ranks over there they are but slaying the outer body, they are not killing the spirit, which is eternal. The spirit goes from change to change, from incarnation to incarnation. It is eternal. This deepest being of man is not affected in this battle. Rise, Arjuna, rise to the spiritual standpoint, then you can go and give yourself up to your duty. You need not shudder nor be sad at heart, for in killing your enemies you are not killing their essential being."

Thus speaks Krishna, and at first hearing his words are in a sense trivial, though in a special way. In many respects the Westerner is short-sighted in his thinking and consciousness. He never stops to consider that everything is evolving. If he says that Krishna's exhortation, as I have expressed it, is trivial, it is as though one were to say, "Why do they honor Pythagoras as such a great man when every schoolboy and girl knows his theorem?" It would be stupid to conclude that Pythagoras was not a great man in having discovered his theorem just because every schoolboy understands it! We see how stupid this is, but we do not notice when we fail to realize that what any Western philosopher may repeat by rote as the wisdom of Krishna — that the spirit is eternal, immortal — was a sublime wisdom at

the time Krishna revealed it. Souls like Arjuna did indeed feel that blood-relations ought not to fight. They still felt the common blood that flowed in a group of people. To hear it said that "the spirit is eternal" (spirit in the sense of what is generally conceived, abstractly, as the center of man's being) — the spirit is eternal and undergoes transformations, passing from incarnation to incarnation — this stated in abstract and intellectual terms was something absolutely new and epoch-making in its newness when it resounded in Arjuna's soul through Krishna's words. All the people in Arjuna's environment believed definitely in reincarnation, but as Krishna taught it, as a general and abstract *idea*, it was new, especially in regard to Arjuna's situation. This is one reason why we had to say that such a truth can only be called "trivial" in a special sense. That holds true in another respect as well. Our abstract thought, which we use even in the pursuit of popular science, which we regard today as quite natural — this thinking activity was by no means always so natural and simple.

In order to illustrate what I say, let me give you a radical example. You will think it strange that while for all of you it is quite natural to speak of a "fish," it was by no means natural for primitive peoples to do so. Primitive peoples are acquainted with trout and salmon, cod and herring, but "fish" they do not know. They have no such word as "fish," because their thought does not extend to such abstract generalization. They know individual trees, but "tree" they do not know. Thinking in such general concepts is by no means natural to primitive races even in the present time. This mode of thinking has indeed only entered humanity in the course of its evolution. In fact, one who considers why it was that logic first began in the time of ancient Greece, could scarcely be surprised when the statement is made on occult grounds that logical thinking has only existed since the period that *followed* the original composition of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Krishna impels Arjuna to logical thought, to thinking in abstractions, as if to a new thing that is only now to enter humanity.

But this activity of thought that man has developed and takes quite for granted today, people have the most distorted and unnatural notions about. Western philosophers in particular have most distorted ideas about thought, for they generally take it to be merely a photographic reproduction of external sense reality. They imagine that concepts and ideas and the whole inner thinking of man simply arises in him out of the external physical world. While libraries of philosophical words have been written in the West to prove that thought is merely something having its origin in the stimulus of the external physical world, it is only in our time that thought will be valued for what it really is.

Here I reach a point that is most important for those who would undergo an occult development in their own souls. I want to make every effort to get this point clear. The medieval alchemists used to say — I cannot now discuss what they really meant by it — that gold could be made from all metals, gold in any desired amount, but that one must first have a minute quantity of it. Without that one could not make gold. Whether or not this is true of gold, it is certainly true of *clairvoyance*. No man could actually attain clairvoyance if he did not have a tiny amount of it already in his soul. It is generally supposed that men as they are, are not clairvoyant. If that were true they could never become clairvoyant at all, because just as the alchemist thought that one must have a little gold to conjure forth large quantities, so must one already be a little clairvoyant in order to be able to develop and extend it more and more. Now you may see two alternatives here and ask, "Do you think then that we all are clairvoyant, if only slightly, *or*, do you think that those of us who are not clairvoyant can never become so?" This is just the point. It is most important to understand that there is really no one among you who does not have this starting-point of clairvoyance, though you may not be conscious of it. All of you have it. None of you is lacking in it. What is this that all possess? It is something not generally regarded or valued as clairvoyance. Let me make a rather crude comparison.

If a pearl is lying in the roadway and a chicken finds it, the chicken does not value the pearl. Most men and women today are chickens in this respect. They do not value the pearl that lies there in full view before them. What they value is something quite different. They value their concepts and ideas, but no one could think abstractly, could *have* thoughts and ideas, if he were not clairvoyant. In our ordinary thinking the pearl of clairvoyance is contained from the start. Ideas arise in the soul through exactly the same process as what gives rise to its highest powers. It is immensely important to learn to understand that clairvoyance begins in something common and everyday. We only have to recognize the super-sensible nature of our concepts and ideas. We must realize that these come to us from the super-sensible worlds; only then can we look at the matter rightly.

When I tell you of the higher hierarchies, of Seraphim and Cherubim and Thrones, right down to Archangels and Angels, these are beings who must speak to the human soul from higher spiritual worlds. It is from those worlds that concepts and ideas come into the human soul, not from the world of the senses. In the 18th century what was considered a great word was uttered by a pioneer of thinking, "O, Man, make bold to use thy power

of reason!" Today a great word must resound in men's souls, "O, Man, make bold to claim thy concepts and ideas as the beginning of thy clairvoyance." What I have just expressed I said many years ago, publicly in my books *Truth and Science* and *The Philosophy of Freedom*, where I showed that human ideas come from super-sensible, spiritual knowledge. It was not understood at the time, and no wonder, for those who should have understood it were — well, like the chickens! We must realize that at the moment when Krishna stands before Arjuna and gives him the power of abstract judgment, he is thereby giving him, for the first time in the whole of evolution, the starting-point for the knowledge of higher worlds. The spirit can be seen on the very surface of the changes that take place within the external world of sense. Bodies die; the spirit, the abstract, the essential being, is eternal. The spiritual can be seen playing on the surface of phenomena. This is what Krishna would reveal to Arjuna as the beginning of a new clairvoyance for men.

One thing is necessary for men of today if they would attain to an inwardly-experienced truth. They must have once passed through the feeling of the fleeting nature of all outer transformations. They must have experienced the mood of infinite sadness, of infinite tragedy, and at the same time the exultation of joy. They must have felt the breath of the ephemeral that streams out from all things. They must have been able to fix their interest on this coming forth and passing away again, the transitoriness of the world of sense. Then, when they have been able to feel the deepest pain and the fullest delight in the external world, they must once have been absolutely alone — alone with their concepts and ideas. They must have had the feeling, "In these concepts I grasp the mystery of the worlds; I take hold of the outer edge of cosmic being," — the very expression I once used in my *The Philosophy of Freedom*! This must be experienced, not merely understood intellectually, and if you would experience it, it must be in deepest loneliness. Then you have another feeling. On the one hand you experience the majesty of the world of ideas that is spread out over the *All*. On the other hand you experience with the deepest bitterness that you have to separate yourself from space and time in order to be together with your concepts and ideas. Loneliness! It is the icy cold of loneliness. Furthermore, it comes to you that the world of ideas has now drawn together as in a single point of this loneliness. Now you say, I am alone with my world of ideas. You become utterly bewildered in your world of ideas, an experience that stirs you to the depths of your soul. At length you say to yourself, "Perhaps all this is only I myself;

perhaps the only truth about these laws is that they exist in the point of my own loneliness." Thus you experience, infinitely enhanced, utter doubt in all existence.

When you have this experience in your world of ideas, when the full cup of doubt in all existence has been poured out with pain and bitterness over your soul, then only are you ripe to understand how, after all, it is not the infinite spaces and periods of time of the physical world from which your ideas have come. Now only, after the bitterness of doubt, you open yourself to the regions of the spiritual and know that your doubt was justified, and in what sense it was justified. For it had to be, since you imagined that the ideas had come into your soul from the times and spaces of the physical world. How do you now feel your world of ideas having experienced its origin in the spiritual worlds? Now for the first time you feel yourself inspired. Before, you were feeling the infinite void spread around you like a dark abyss. Now you begin to feel that you are standing on a rock that rises up out of the abyss. You know with certainty, "Now I am connected with the spiritual worlds. They, not the world of sense, have bestowed on me my world of ideas."

This is the next stage for the evolving soul. It is the stage where man begins to be deeply in earnest with what has today come to be a trivial, commonplace truth. To bear this feeling in your heart will prepare you to receive in a true way the first truth that Krishna gives to Arjuna after the mighty upheaval and convulsion in his soul: The truth of the eternal spirit living through outer transformations. To abstract understanding we speak in concepts and ideas. Krishna speaks to Arjuna's heart. What may be trivial and commonplace for the understanding is infinitely deep and sublime to the heart of man.

We see how the first stage shows itself at once as a necessary consequence of the deeply moving experience that is presented to us at the start of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Now the next stage.

It is easy to speak of what is often called *dogma* in occultism — something that is accepted in blind faith and given out as gospel truth. Let me suggest to you that it would be quite simple for someone to come forward and say, "This fellow has published a book on Occult Science, speaking in it about Saturn, Sun and Moon evolutions, and there is no way of controlling these statements. They can only be accepted as dogma." I could understand such a thing being said, because it corresponds to the superficial nature of our age; and there is no getting away from it, our age

is superficial. Indeed, under certain conditions this objection would not be without foundation. It would be justified, for example, if you were to tear out of the book all the pages that precede the chapter on the Saturn evolution. If anyone were to begin reading the book at this chapter it *would* be nothing but dogma. If, however, the author prefaces it with the other chapters, he is by no means a dogmatist because he shows what paths the soul has to go through in order to reach such conceptions. That is the point, that it has been shown in the book how every individual man, if he reaches into the depths of his soul, is bound to come to such conceptions. Herein all dogmatism ceases.

Thus we can feel it natural that Krishna, having brought Arjuna into the world of ideas and wishing to lead him on into the occult world, now goes on to show him the next stage, how every soul can reach that higher world if it finds the right starting-point. Krishna then must begin by rejecting every form of dogmatism, and he does so radically. Here we come up against a hard saying by Krishna. He absolutely rejects what for centuries had been most holy to the highest men of that age — the contents of the Vedas. He says, "Hold not to the Vedas, nor to the word of the Vedas. Hold fast to Yoga!" That is to say, "Hold fast to what is within thine own soul!"

Let us grasp what Krishna means by this exhortation. He does not mean that the contents of the Vedas are untrue. He does not want Arjuna to accept what is given in the Vedas *dogmatically* as the disciples of the Veda teaching do. He wants to inspire him to take his start from the very first original point whence the human soul evolves. For this purpose all dogmatic wisdom must be laid aside. We can imagine Krishna saying to himself that even though Arjuna will in the end reach the very same wisdom that is contained in the Vedas, still he must be drawn away from them, for he must go his own way, beginning with the sources in his own soul. Krishna rejects the Vedas, whether their content is true or untrue. Arjuna's path must start from himself, through his own inwardness he must come to recognize Krishna. Arjuna must be assumed to have in himself what a man can and must have if he is really to enter into the concrete truths of the super-sensible worlds. Krishna has called Arjuna's attention to something that from then onward is a common attribute of humanity. Having led him to this point he must lead him further and bring him to recognize what he is to achieve through Yoga. Thus, Arjuna must first undergo Yoga. Here the poem rises to another level.

In this second stage we see how the *Bhagavad Gita* goes on through the first four discourses with ever-increasing dramatic impulse, coming at length to what is most individual of all. Krishna describes the path of Yoga to Arjuna. We shall speak of this more in detail tomorrow. He describes the path that Arjuna must take in order to pass from the everyday clairvoyance of concepts and ideas to what can only be attained through Yoga. Concepts only require to be placed in the right light; but Arjuna has to be *guided* to Yoga. This is the second stage.

The third stage shows once more an enhancement of dramatic power, and again comes the expression of a deep occult truth. Let us assume that someone really takes the Yoga path. He will rise at length from his ordinary consciousness to a higher state of consciousness, which includes not only the ego that lies between the limits of birth and death but what passes from one incarnation to the next. The soul awakens to know itself in an expanded ego. It grows into a wider consciousness. The soul goes through a process that is essentially an everyday process but that is not experienced fully in our everyday life because man goes to sleep every night. The sense world fades out around him and he becomes unconscious of it. Now for every human soul the possibility exists of letting this world of sense vanish from his consciousness as it does when he goes to sleep, and then to live in higher worlds as in an absolute reality. Thereby man rises to a high level of consciousness. We shall still have to speak of Yoga, and also of the modern exercises that make this possible. But when man gradually attains to where he no longer, consciously, lives and feels and knows *in himself*, but lives and feels and knows *together with the whole earth*, then he grows into a higher level of consciousness where the things of the sense world vanish for him as they do in sleep.

However, before man can attain this level he must be able to identify himself with the soul of his planet, earth. We shall see that this is possible. We know that man not only experiences the rhythm of sleeping and waking but other rhythms of the earth as well — of summer and winter. When one follows the path of Yoga or goes through a modern occult training, he can lift himself above the ordinary consciousness that experiences the cycles of sleeping and waking, summer and winter. He can learn to look at himself from outside. He becomes aware of being able to look back at himself just as he ordinarily looks at things outside himself. Now he observes the things, the cycles in external life. He sees alternating conditions. He realizes how his body, so long as he is outside himself, takes on a form similar to that of the earth in summer with all its vegetation. What material science discovers and calls *nerves* he begins to perceive as a

sprouting forth of something plant-like at the time of going to sleep, and when he returns again into everyday consciousness he feels how this plant-like life shrinks together again and becomes the instrument for thinking, feeling and willing in his waking consciousness. He feels his going out from the body and returning into it analogous to the alternation of summer and winter on the earth. In effect he feels something summer-like in going to sleep and something winter-like in waking up — not as one might imagine, the opposite way round. From this moment onward he learns to understand what the spirit of the earth is, and how it is asleep in summer and awake in winter, not vice versa. He realizes the wonderful experience of identifying himself with the spirit of the earth. From this moment he says to himself, "I live not only inside my skin, but as a cell lives in my bodily organism so do I live in the organism of the earth. The earth is asleep in summer and awake in winter as I am asleep and awake in the alternation of night and day. And as the cell is to my consciousness, so am I to the consciousness of the earth."

The path of Yoga, especially in its modern sense, leads to this expansion of consciousness, to the identification of our own being with a more comprehensive being. We feel ourselves interwoven with the whole earth. Then as men we no longer feel ourselves bound to a particular time and place, but we feel our humanity such as it has developed from the very beginning of the earth. We feel the age-long succession of our evolutions through the course of the evolution of the earth. Thus Yoga leads us on to feel our atonement with what goes from one incarnation to another in the earth's evolution. That is the third stage.

This is the reason for the great beauty in the artistic composition of the *Bhagavad Gita*. In its climaxes, its inner artistic form, it reflects deep occult truths. Beginning with an instruction in the ordinary concepts of our thinking it goes on to an indication of the path of Yoga. Then at the third stage to a description of the marvelous expansion of man's horizon over the whole earth, where Krishna awakens in Arjuna the idea, "All that lives in your soul has lived often before, only you know nothing of it. But I have this consciousness in myself when I look back on all the transformations through which I have lived, and I will lead you up so that you may learn to feel yourself as I feel myself." A new moment of dramatic force as beautiful as it is deeply and occultly true!

Thus we come to see the evolution of mankind from out of its everyday consciousness, from the pearl in the roadway that only needs to be recognized, from the particular world of thoughts and concepts that are a

matter of everyday life in any one age, up to the point from where we can look out over all that we really have in us, which lives on from incarnation to incarnation on the earth.



Lecture 3

May 30, 1913

IN THE last lecture I was trying to show you how the thinking of the present day, which tends to the formation of abstract concepts, is not really a gift of the outer physical world but a gift of the spiritual world. I tried to show you how at bottom this abstract thinking enters man's soul in exactly the same way as the revelations of the Beings of the Higher Hierarchies. The point then is this, that in our most ordinary life we really have something in us that is already of like nature to clairvoyant perception. Now we have something else in us as well, which is even more akin to clairvoyant perception even though in a more hidden way. I mean that consciousness that appears between our ordinary waking state and our sleeping — our dream consciousness. We cannot become familiar in a practical way with the ascent of the soul into higher worlds without trying to get a clear idea of the peculiar life that the soul leads in the twilight consciousness of dreaming. What now is a dream in reality?

Let us begin by considering the dream pictures we have around or before us, which in general are more fleeting, less sharply outlined than the perceptions of ordinary life. These pictures seem to flit past our souls. When, afterward, we come to analyze them objectively we can be struck by the fact that in most cases they have some kind of connection with our life on the physical plane. Of course, there are people who are only too ready to see something high and wonderful in their dreams, or to interpret them at once as revelations of higher worlds. There are those who really believe that a dream has given them something altogether new, something that has never been there before. In most cases we shall be mistaken in interpreting our dreams in such a way. In our careless haste we fail to recognize how, after all, some experience or other we have had on the physical plane more or less recently, or perhaps even many years ago, has reappeared in the changing, weaving pictures of our dreams. For this very reason it is quite easy for the materialistic science of our age to reject the idea that there is anything remarkable in the revelations of our dreams, and instead point out that dreams are simply copies or reflections of what has been experienced in external life. If you are acquainted with the present-day science of dreams you will realize that it is always at pains to prove that a dream contains nothing more than the reflections of the

physical world that the brain carries in itself. It must be admitted that such an attitude can easily reject any higher significance in our dream life, showing that the higher revelations many people claim to have are pictures characteristic of the age in which they live, pictures that could not have been seen at all in any other age. So, for example, people today often dream in images derived from inventions and discoveries only made in the nineteenth century. It of course is easily proved that images derived from external life steal their way into the ever-changing play of dreams.

A person who would gain a clear idea of his dream experiences, learning something from them to help him in entering the occult worlds, must therefore be exceedingly careful in this realm. He must make a habit of carefully following out all the hidden connections. If he does so, he will realize that most of his dreams give him no more than he has already experienced in the outer world. But it is just when we become more careful in analyzing our dream life — and every aspiring occultist should do so — that we shall gradually begin to notice how one thing or another wells up before us that we could not possibly have experienced in our external life during this incarnation. One who follows such indications as are given in my book *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment* will notice that his dream-life gradually begins to change. His dreams do actually begin to assume a different character. One of the first experiences he can have may be the following.

Perhaps he has been thinking for a long time about some perplexing problem and has at last concluded that his understanding is not yet equal to solving it, nor is all that he has been able to learn from external sources adequate for solving it. Now it will not generally happen that he is immediately conscious of having a dream in which this problem is solved for him. Even so he will be able to have a certain higher consciousness at a comparatively early stage. As if awaking from a dream he will seem to *remember* something. He can say to himself, "I have not been dreaming about this problem, nor was I conscious of a dream I have had before. Yet a kind of memory is arising in me. It is as though some being had come near to me who solved this problem for me by giving or suggesting a solution."

One who gradually widens his consciousness by following the indications I have given will have this experience fairly easily. He will recall something he has lived through as though in a dream, and will know that at the time he was not aware of experiencing it. Such an experience will seem to shine upward from the depths of his soul and he will say to himself, "When I was

not there with my intelligence, my cleverness, when I was protecting my soul from the suggestions of my intellect, then my soul had greater power. My soul could come freely in touch with the solution of the problem, before which I was powerless with my intellect and understanding."

No doubt scientists will often find it easy here too to give a materialistic explanation for such an experience. But one who has had it knows full well that what has appeared to him, emerging like the recollection of a dream experience, reveals something quite different from a mere reminiscence of ordinary life. The whole mood of his soul afterward tells him he has never had such an experience before. It brings him into a wonderful feeling of bliss and elation to realize that in the depths of his soul something more is active than is present in his ordinary consciousness. This recognition can become still more distinct, and it happens in the following way.

If we carry out energetically the exercises given in my book *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, and if we continue to do so for a long time — even perhaps for several decades — then an experience may arise in our soul quite similar to what I have just been describing. For example, one which is mixed up with the recollection of an experience in everyday life we had years ago, perhaps a most disagreeable experience that we felt as a hard blow of fate and could never recall without pain and bitterness. Now something like the memory of a dream arises in our consciousness but it is a strange dream. It tells us that feelings live within us that drew this bitter experience to us with irresistible force and welcomed it gladly. Something lives in us that felt a kind of *delight* in bringing about all the circumstances that led up to this stroke of fate. When we have had such a dream remembrance, we know full well that while in our usual consciousness, which regulates our external affairs, there has not been a single moment — not one in the whole course of our present life — when we did not feel this stroke of fate with bitter pain. Yet, deep down within us there is something that stands in quite a different relation to this blow of fate. It used all its power and magnetic force to draw together the circumstances needed to bring about this misfortune. We did not know it at the time. Now we notice that behind our everyday consciousness another, deeper layer of our soul life was wisely at work.

If we have such an experience — and we shall have them if we earnestly carry through the exercises I have indicated — from then onward we have an extended area of knowledge and conviction. In ordinary life we feel ourselves in a certain relation to the outer world and the events that come to us in the course of our destiny. We meet these events with sympathy

and antipathy. In the case mentioned this particular blow of fate was felt as a bitter and hateful experience. We did not know that all the time our soul had another wider life that had longed to live through what we felt to be so unwelcome. This feeling is quite different in its quality from any recollection out of ordinary life, for in our innermost being we are very different from what we imagine. It is just this difference that now becomes evident in our soul. It enters in such a way that we know it has brought us revelations from realms into which our everyday consciousness cannot penetrate. It widens our whole concept of our life of soul. We know then, by experience, that our soul-life contains something far more than its content within the limits of birth and death. If we do not penetrate into these deeper regions we have no idea that beneath the threshold of consciousness we are quite different beings from what we imagine ourselves to be in everyday life. When a new, significant feeling thus arises, the horizon of what we call our world expands into a new region. We realize why it is that in ordinary life we can enter it only under certain conditions.

In attempting to describe to you what may be called the occult development of dream-life, I have set before you two quite different conditions. Our ordinary dream-life, that most people experience continually at the border of sleeping and waking and that is nourished by images of everyday life, and an altogether new world of inner life that can arise on going through a certain training. We have the power to plunge into the regions of dream-life in such a way as to find a new world dawning upon us, one in which we have actual experiences of the spiritual worlds. One condition must be fulfilled, however, if we would have these new experiences between sleeping and waking during the night. We must be able to exclude the recollections and images of our ordinary life. So long as these interfere in this realm of dreams, so long do they make themselves important in it and block the way to real experiences of the higher worlds.

Why is it that the images from our everyday life thrust so insistently into this higher realm? Because, whether we confess it or not, we have the liveliest interest in all that concerns our particular selves in the external world. If some people imagine that they no longer take any special interest in their life, that makes no difference at all. No one who realizes how in this connection people can give themselves up to the grossest illusions, will be misled by such imaginings. After all, man *is* closely attached to the sympathies and antipathies of his everyday life. If you really try to carry out the exercises I have given for soul development you will soon realize that it all comes to this, that you must detach your interest from your everyday life. People carry out the directions given in *Knowledge of the*

Higher Worlds and Its Attainment in all sorts of ways. The book is read by many different people, and for many different reasons, and one's reason for looking into it will determine one's attitude to it. Thus, someone begins reading perhaps with the most beautiful feelings of how he may gain insight into the higher worlds. Then his curiosity is aroused — and why indeed should we not be curious about this realm! Curiosity often begins to stir even if one begins with the most holy feelings. That will only carry through for a little while, however, for all sorts of inner feelings begin coming in and make us stop, so we give it up.

But these feelings that we do not wish to recognize clearly, and generally interpret wrongly, are just those connected with sympathies and antipathies. We have to free ourselves from them in quite another way if we really mean to carry out these exercises. In fact, we do not free ourselves from them. That is why we stop doing the exercises. Though we say we want to break free of them we do not do it, but when a person is really in earnest about doing the exercises the effect they can have is seen very soon. His sympathies and antipathies toward life change a little. I must say this does not happen very often. When it does happen the change is of *very* great significance because it means we are struggling against the very forces that allow the images from our everyday life to arise in our dreams. They can no longer find their way in if we have come so far as to alter our sympathies and antipathies in any sphere of life, no matter which.

This alteration in the forces of sympathy need not occur in a high realm of life, but in *some* domain it *must* be carried out, perhaps in the most everyday affairs. There are people who say they do their exercises every day, morning and evening, and for hours at a time, and cannot go even one step into the spiritual worlds. Sometimes it is difficult to explain to them how easily one can understand that. In many cases they only need to realize this fact, that they are still grumbling about the same things they were grumbling about twenty, even thirty years ago, although they have been doing exercises all the time. The very language of their grumbling is still the same.

Then there are those who try to apply external means that can have certain effects in occultism. For example, they become vegetarians. In spite of all their endeavors to break away from a liking for meat, however, they attain no results from continued exercises. They may ascribe it to quite other reasons, thinking for instance that they need meat for their body, their brain, and therefore return occasionally to the flesh-pots of Egypt. Let

us not imagine that it is an easy thing to transform one's sympathies and antipathies. To quote a passage from Faust, "Easy it is, yet is the easy hard." This is an apt expression of the situation of the evolving soul that is trying to rise into higher worlds.

It is not a question of changing this or that particular sympathy or antipathy but of changing *any* whatsoever. If we do, then after certain exercises we can enter the domain of dream life in such a way that we bring nothing into it of our everyday sense experiences. Thereby in a certain sense new experiences have room to enter. When, through an occult development, we have really gone through such experiences in practice, we become aware of a certain layer of consciousness present in us that lies behind the everyday consciousness with which every person is familiar. In ordinary life our dreams take place in this second layer of consciousness, "dream-consciousness," but it only becomes such through our carrying into it what we experience from our waking consciousness. If, however, we hold back all our everyday experiences from this region then experiences from the higher worlds can enter. These higher experiences are present in our surrounding world here every day. When they first arise we begin to realize that our everyday consciousness itself seems like a dream compared to the *reality* of those experiences. We find that reality only begins on that higher level.

Returning to the example of suffering a blow of fate that subsequently caused such bitter feelings, let us try to understand how one actually comes to realize the beginning of higher consciousness. Along with this bitterness we notice that there was something in us that sought out this misfortune, even feeling the need of it for our development. Now for the first time we realize in practice what karma is. We entered this incarnation with an imperfection in our soul. We felt it deeply, and thus were drawn by a magnetic power toward this blow of fate. By fully experiencing it we have mastered and done away with the imperfection. That is something real, and important. How superficial then is everyday judgment in creating a feeling of antipathy toward the misfortune. Here rather is the higher reality: Our soul goes forward from one life to another. How short is the time in which it can feel antipathy toward a blow of fate! When it looks out beyond the horizon of this incarnation, it feels one thing only to be necessary, to become ever more perfect. This feeling is stronger than any we have in our ordinary consciousness. Ordinarily, if it had been confronted previously by this blow of fate it would have slunk past it like a coward, would not have chosen the compensating necessity. But the deeper consciousness of which we know nothing does not do this. Instead it seeks

its destiny, and feels it as a process of growth toward perfection. It says, "I entered into this life. I was aware of an imperfection that has been in my soul since birth. If I would develop my soul this imperfection must be remedied, but to do this I must go on to meet this misfortune. I must seek it out."

There we have the stronger element in the soul, compared to which the web of ordinary life with all its sympathies and antipathies is like a dream. There beyond we enter into that life and feeling of which we can say, "It knows us better, is stronger in us than our ordinary consciousness."

Now we notice another thing. If we really have the experience just described, if we do not merely know it in theory but truly experience it, then of necessity at the same time we have another experience. While we feel we can already enter into those regions where everything is different from what it is in ordinary consciousness, a feeling arises in us, "I do not want to enter." This feeling is very deep. As a rule the curiosity that impels people to enter the spiritual worlds is not nearly strong enough to overcome the feeling of revulsion that says, "I will not enter." The aversion we feel at this particular stage arises with tremendous force, and all sorts of misunderstandings about it are possible.

Suppose that someone has even received personal instructions. He comes to his instructor and says, "I cannot get on at all, your instructions are of no use." Indeed he may honestly think so. If the instructor gives him the answer due him, however, he would not be able to understand it at all. This answer is, "You can enter perfectly well but you do not want to." The pupil honestly believes he has the will to enter because his reluctance remains hidden in his subconsciousness. Indeed, the moment he begins to realize his reluctance he lessens it. The idea that he does not want to enter horrifies him so, he immediately begins to damp down his unwillingness.

This reluctance is a subtle and insidious thing. We feel that we cannot enter with the ego, the self, that we have acquired in this world. If a person wants to evolve to higher things he feels very strongly that he must *leave this self behind*. That, however, is a difficult thing to do because man would never have developed this self if he did not feel in his daily consciousness that he has it in order to develop it here. His ordinary ego has come into this world in order to evolve. Thus, when man wants to enter the real world he feels he must leave behind what he has been able to evolve in the ordinary world. Then there is only one way. He must have

developed this self more strongly than he needs for his ordinary consciousness. As a rule he only develops it as far as he needs it in his ordinary life.

Now if you observe the second point in *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, you will find it amounts to this, that the self must be made stronger than is necessary for the purposes of daily life. Only then are we able to go out of our body at night and still retain something that we have not used up. It is only when we have fortified our ordinary self by our exercises, and have an excess of self-reliance in us that we no longer want to shrink back from the higher worlds. But then a new and considerable danger arises. We no longer perhaps bring the recollections of ordinary life into our dreams but we bring something else — our expanded and strengthened self-consciousness. It is as though we filled that realm with it.

Anyone who carries through such exercises as given in my book and thus comes to have experiences like the inner soul experiences of Arjuna, enters the realm of dream-life with an expanded, strengthened self. The result is the same whether done by special training or whether we were destined to expand it at a definite period in our life. Arjuna is in this position. He stands at the boundary between the everyday world and that of dreams. He lives his way into that higher region because through his destiny he has a more powerful self in that realm than he needs in his ordinary life. This point I shall have to elaborate still further, showing why Arjuna has this more powerful consciousness, because now, as soon as he penetrates into that realm, Krishna at once receives him. Krishna lifts him out of the self he has acquired in ordinary life, and thus he becomes a different man from what he would have been if with his expanded self he had not met Krishna. In that case he would certainly have said to himself, "Blood relations are fighting against one another, events are taking place that must ruin the ancient holy caste-distinctions and the service to our ancestors — events that must corrupt our womankind, and conditions that will prevent us from kindling the fires of sacrifice to our forefathers." All these things were part of Arjuna's everyday consciousness. By his destiny he was torn out of it. He must stand on ground where he has to break with all these accustomed feelings connected with old traditions. Thus he would have to say to himself, "Away with all I hold sacred; with all the traditions that have been handed down to me. I will hurl myself into the battle." But that is not what happens. Krishna appears, and utters what must appear to Arjuna as the most extreme unscrupulousness, as egoism driven beyond all bounds. The excess of force that Arjuna would otherwise have experienced, that he

would have used to live through his own life, Krishna uses as a power whereby he makes himself visible to Arjuna. To make this thought still more clear we may say that if Arjuna had simply met Krishna, even though the latter had actually come to him, he would have known nothing of him, just as we would know nothing of the sense-world if we had not received something from the sense-world itself that formed our senses for perceiving it. Similarly, Krishna must take from Arjuna his expanded and strengthened consciousness. He must in a sense tear his self out of him, and then by its help make himself visible to Arjuna. He makes a mirror, we can say, of what he has torn from Arjuna, so that he may be able to appear to him.

We have sought out what in Arjuna's consciousness enabled Krishna to meet him. There still remains unexplained how Arjuna came to it at all. Nowhere do we see the statement that Arjuna had done occult exercises. In fact he had not done any. How then is he able to meet Krishna? What was it that gave Arjuna a higher and stronger self-consciousness? We shall start from this question in the next lecture.



Lecture 4

May 31, 1913

WE HAVE seen that if man would enter into the realm to which, among other things, the woven fabric of our dreams belongs, he must take with him from the ordinary world something we designated as an intensified self-consciousness. There must be a stronger and fuller life in his ego than he needs for his purposes on the physical plane. In our age this excess of self-consciousness is drawn forth from our soul by the experiences we gain through occult exercises such as I have given. Thus the first step consists in strengthening and intensifying one's inner self.

Man instinctively feels that he needs this strengthening, and for this very reason a kind of fear and shyness comes over him if he has not yet attained it. He tends to shrink from the prospect of developing into higher worlds. We must continually bear in mind that in the course of evolution the soul of man has passed through many different stages. Thus, in the period of the *Bhagavad Gita* it was not yet possible for a human soul to intensify its self-consciousness by such occult exercises as may be practiced today. In that ancient time, however, something else was still present in the self; I mean, primeval clairvoyance. This is also a faculty man does not really need for his ordinary life on the physical plane, if he can be content with what his epoch offers him. But the men of that ancient time still had the remnants of primeval clairvoyance.

So, we can look far back and put ourselves in the place of a person living at the time when the *Bhagavad Gita* originated. If such a man were to express his experience he would say, "When I look out into the world around me I receive impressions through my senses. These impressions can be combined by the intellect, whose organ the brain is. Apart from that I still have another faculty, a clairvoyant power that enables me to acquire knowledge of other worlds. This power tells me that man belongs to other realms, that my human nature extends far beyond the ordinary physical world." This very power, by means of which there arises in the soul the instinctive knowledge that it belongs not only to the physical world — this power is actually a stronger kind of self-consciousness. It is as though

these last remnants of ancient clairvoyance still had the power to surcharge the soul with selfhood. Today man can again develop in himself such surplus forces if he will go through the right occult exercises.

Now, a certain objection might be made. You know that in anthroposophical lectures we must always forestall objections that the true occultist is well aware of. It might be asked, "Why should it occur to present-day man to want to undertake occult exercises at all? Why isn't he content with what his ordinary intellect offers him?" That, my friends, is a big question because we touch something here that is not only a question but an actual fact for every thoughtful soul in the present cycle of evolution. If man did not reach out to anything more than what his senses and his brain-bound intellect can show him, he would certainly be content with his existence. He would observe the things and events around him, their relationships, and how they come into being and pass away again, but he would ask no questions about this ebb and flow of activity. He would be content with it as an animal may be content with its existence. In fact, if man were really the being that materialistic thinking considers him, he could quite well accept his life as such and ask no questions. This is the life of the animal, being content with all that arises and passes before its senses. Why isn't this the case with man?

Remember that we are speaking of present-day man, for even in ancient Greece the human soul was different in this respect from what it is today. When we today give ourselves with our whole soul to the study of natural science, or when we consider all the events of historical evolution and gain knowledge of the external science of history — with all this something else finds its way almost imperceptibly into our soul, something that has no purpose or sense for physical life. Many comparisons have been made to illustrate this fact. I would like to mention one of them because people often make use of it without considering its deeper significance. A famous medical authority in the last third of the 19th century, wishing to enhance the honor of pure science, once drew attention to a Greek philosopher Pythagoras who was asked, "What do you think of the philosophers who spend their time speculating on the meaning and purpose of life? How does their occupation compare with the activities of ordinary men who pursue some useful calling and play a useful part in community life?" The philosopher replied, "Look at a fair or market; men come to buy and sell and everyone is busy, but there are a few among them who do not want to buy or sell but simply want to stroll about and watch what is going on."

The philosopher implied that the market represented life, people busy in all sorts of ways; but the philosophers are not busy with such affairs, instead they look at what is happening and try to learn all about it.

Somehow a great respect for the philosophers who do not seem to take part in any productive activity has penetrated deeply into the minds of the so-called intellectuals among mankind. The philosophers are honored just *because* their science is independent, detached, self-sufficient. Yet this comparison ought to give us food for thought, for it is by no means so banal as it might appear at first sight. After all, it is curious that philosophers should be compared to idlers in the market-place of life, useless folk while their fellows labor. One might indeed think of it in this way, but we must realize that judgments are passed that originally are quite correct but become altogether wrong if they linger on for centuries, or as in this case for thousands of years. Therefore we ask again if these people who stroll about in life are really to be judged as idlers. That depends upon the standards by which we value human life. Certainly there are those who regard the philosophers as useless loiterers and think they would do better to carry through some productive work. From their point of view they may be quite right, but when man today observes life through the senses and considers it by means of the brain-bound intellect, something steals into his soul that obviously has no connection with the outer world of the senses. That is the point.

This can be seen clearly in books that try to construct a satisfactory picture of the world and life on a purely materialistic basis. It usually turns out that the big questions do not arise until the end. These books claiming to solve the riddle of the universe actually begin to set forth those riddles only in their concluding pages. In effect, when one begins today to study the external world that is the subject treated in such books, the thought slips in that either man exists for other worlds besides, or else the physical world deceives us and makes fools of us because it is continually putting questions we cannot answer.

An enormous part of our soul life is meaningless if life really ends with death; if man has no part in, no connection with a higher world. Indeed, it is not the longing for something he does not have, but the lack of sense for what he has, that impels man to follow up these questions and ask what it is that comes into the soul that does not belong to this world of the senses. Thus he is driven to cultivate something evidently without foundation in the external world. He is impelled to take up occult exercises. We would not say man has an inward longing for immortality and therefore

invents the idea of it, but rather that the external world has implanted something in his soul that would be meaningless, unreal, if the whole of existence were included between birth and death. Man is impelled to ask the very nature, not of something he does not have, but of something he has.

In fact, present-day man is no longer quite in the position of a mere loiterer or on-looker, so he cannot appeal now to the Greek philosopher. In those times the comparison held good, but today it does not. Today we might say that buyers and sellers come and go. When at length they close the market and make up accounts they find something that certainly could neither have been bought nor sold, nor can they find out whence it came. That never happens in an ordinary market, but so it is in the market of life. (Every comparison has its flaw and this one is all the better for it.) As we go on living we are continually finding things that life opens to view, yet no explanation for them is to be found in the world of sense. That is the deeper reason why there are people in the world today who despair of life yet at the same time have vague, unrecognized longings. Something is active in them that does not belong to the physical world but keeps on putting forth questions about other worlds. For this reason we now have to acquire a *spiritual* culture. Otherwise we shall be overcome by hopelessness and despair.

What today we have to acquire, a man like Arjuna had, simply because he lived in the ancient age of primeval clairvoyance. Yet it also was a period of transition, because he belonged to that time in evolution when only the last remnants and echoes of that clairvoyance remained. If we are to understand the *Bhagavad Gita* it is important to realize that at the time of its origin men were entering an age in which this old clairvoyance gradually became lost. In this lies the deep undercurrent of that sublime poem; or we may say, the source of the breath poured out through it. For this song resounds with tones of a great turning-point in time, when, from the twilight of the old clairvoyance, a night was to begin in which a new force could be born to mankind. Only in that night could a force be born that the soul of today possesses, but that souls of that time did not yet possess. About Arjuna then we can say that ancient clairvoyance is still present in his soul but it is flickering out. It is no longer a strong, spontaneous force but requires such a harrowing experience as I have described to re-awaken it. What then can Arjuna perceive through this awakening of the ancient power of vision, which at other times was dying away within him? He sees the Spiritual Being who is called Krishna.

Here it is necessary to point out that though man may lift his soul today into that realm where his dreams are woven, this is no longer enough to give him a full understanding of Krishna's being. Even if we develop the forces enabling us to consciously pass into the region of dream-consciousness, we still are not able today to fully discover what Krishna is. Referring again to what was said yesterday, let us call our everyday consciousness the lowest realm. About it lies a realm we are unconscious of in daily life, or rather that reaches us in a kind of phantom picture veiled in our dreams. When we push these aside impressions from another world enter. Into all the experiences man has of his physical environment something now enters that is like a kind of overflow in his soul and belongs really to *other* worlds, to inner super-sensible worlds. Now he has an experience that cannot be described as a reminiscence of ordinary life, because the world now has a different aspect from anything known on the physical plane. We discover that we are *seeing* something we do not see in the ordinary world. Though we often imagine that we see light, in reality it is not so. On the physical plane we never see light, only color and different shades of color, darker and lighter colors. We see the effects of light but light itself speeds invisibly through space. We can easily convince ourselves of this fact. When a ray of light strikes through the window we see a kind of streak of light-rays in the room, caused by dust in the air. We see reflections of light from the glittering particles of dust, the light itself remaining invisible.

After lifting his experience to the higher realm we have spoken of, man really does begin to see the light itself. There he is surrounded by flowing light, just as in the physical world he lives in flowing air. Only he does not enter this world with his physical body. He has no need to breathe there. Man enters that world with the part of his being that needs the light as in the physical world his body needs the air. In this region light is the element of life — light-air we might call it — and it is a necessity for existence.

Further, that light is permeated and transfused with something not unlike the cloud-forms shaping and re-shaping in our atmosphere. The clouds are water, but up there what meets us like floating forms is nothing else than the weaving life of *sound*, the music of the spheres. Still further we shall perceive the flowing of *life* itself. Thus we may begin to describe the world into which our soul enters, but the terms of our description must remain meaningless for the physical world. Perhaps he who uses words most lacking in meaning for the physical world will best describe that other world that has a far higher reality.

Of course our materialistically-minded friends will find it easy to refute us. Their arguments against what the occultist has to say are plausible enough. The occultist himself knows how easily such objections are made, for the very reason that the higher worlds are best described by words not suitable for things of the physical plane. For example he would speak of light-air, or air-light. On the physical plane there is no such thing, but over there, there is. Indeed, when we penetrate into that realm we also discover what it is to be deprived of this life element, to have insufficient light-air. We feel a pain of suffocation in our soul, comparable to losing our breath for lack of air on the physical plane. There we also find the opposite condition, a fullness of pure, holy light-air when we live in it and when we perceive spiritual beings who manifest themselves in full clearness in this element of airy light and have their life in it. Those are the beings who stand under the guidance of Lucifer. The moment we enter that realm without sufficient preparation, without proper training, Lucifer gains the power to deprive us of the light-air we need. We can say he suffocates our souls.

It is not quite the same effect as suffocation on the physical plane. But like a polar bear transported to the South, we thirst and long for something that can reach us from the spiritual treasure, the spiritual light of the physical plane. That is just what Lucifer desires, for then we do not pay attention to all that comes from the higher hierarchies but thirstily cleave to all that Lucifer has brought onto the physical plane. This is what happens if we have not sufficiently trained ourselves in preparation. Then when we stand before Lucifer he takes away the light-air from us. We crave breath, and long for the spiritual that comes from the physical plane.

Let us suppose that someone goes through a training that brings him far enough to enter the higher worlds, to reach this upper region. But suppose he has not done all that belongs to the training; suppose he has forgotten that with all his exercises he must at the same time be ennobling his moral sense, his moral feelings, that he must tear all earthly ambitions and lust for power from his soul. Indeed a man can reach the higher worlds even though he is vain and ambitious, but then he takes these qualities with him. When a person has not purified his moral feelings Lucifer takes the light-air away from him, so that he perceives nothing of what is really there, and instead he longs for the things on the physical plane. He breathes in, so to say, what he has been able to perceive on the physical plane. So he may *imagine* that he perceives something only to be seen spiritually in the light-air. He imagines that he sees the different incarnations of various human beings. But it is not so. He does *not* see

them because he lacks the air-light. Instead, like a thirsty being, he sucks up into that realm things of the physical plane below, and describes all manner of things acquired there as though they were processes in the higher region. Actually there is no more harmful way of raising one's soul into the higher worlds than by means of vain and earthly love of power! If one does this, one will never be able to bring down true results of knowledge. What one brings will be a mere reflection, a phantom picture of the speculations and conjectures one may have made in the physical world.

Here we have been describing what may be called the general scenery of that realm. There are also Beings we meet there, whom we may call Elemental Beings. In the physical world we often speak of the forces of nature. In that higher realm these same forces manifest themselves as real beings. There we make a definite discovery. Through the actual facts that meet us we discover that whereas on the physical plane good and evil exist together, in that higher realm there are separate, specific forces of good and evil. Here in the physical world good and evil are combined and interwoven in each human soul. One has more of a tendency to good, another less. In that realm there are evil beings who exist to battle against the work of good beings. On entering that realm, therefore, we already have occasion to make use of the strengthened self-consciousness we mentioned yesterday. We have need of the more acute power of judgment that must come with our enhanced self. Then we may really be in a position to say that here in the higher realm there must needs be beings who have the mission of evil. Such beings have to exist alongside those who have the mission of good.

We often hear it asked, "Why didn't the all-wise God of the universe simply create the good alone? Why isn't it everywhere, always?" Now we gain this conviction, however, that if only the good were present the world would become one-sided, it would not bring forth all the fullness of life that it does yield. The good must have something to oppose it. This, in fact, can already be realized on the physical plane, but in that higher realm we perceive it with far greater force. There we see that only people who are content with a merely sentimental and dreamy outlook can imagine that good beings alone could bring about the purposes of the universe. In the realm of everyday life we might do with sentimentality, but we cannot tolerate it when we enter the stern realities of the super-sensible world. There we know that the good beings alone could not have made the world. They would be too weak to mold this universe. In the totality of evolution those forces must be included which come from the evil beings. There is

great wisdom in this fact that evil is mingled in cosmic evolution. Thus, one of the things we have to get rid of when we enter spiritual life is sentimentality. Bravely and unflinchingly we must approach the dangerous truths that dawn upon us when we perceive the battle that is fought in just this realm — the battle between the good and evil beings that can there be revealed to us. All these are experiences we have when we have trained and adapted our souls to entering consciously into this realm.

So far we have only entered the realm of dreams. We human beings live in still another realm, one for which we are so little adapted in ordinary life that we generally have no perceptions whatever in it. It is the realm through which we live in dreamless sleep. Here already an absolute paradox appears, for sleep after all is characterized by the complete cessation of consciousness. In normal human life today man ceases to be conscious when he falls to sleep, and he does not regain consciousness till he wakes up again. In the age of primeval clairvoyance this realm too was something the soul could experience. If we go back into those ancient periods of evolution there was actually a condition of life corresponding to our sleep in which, however, man could perceive in a still higher, still more spiritual world than the world of dreams. This was true even in early post-Atlantean times. There we find conditions that, in regard to the usual human processes, are exactly like the condition of sleep, but are not, because they are permeated by consciousness. When we have reached this height we do not see the physical world, even though we still see the world of light-air, of sound, of cosmic harmony, and of the battle between the good and evil beings. The world we see may be said to be still more fundamentally different from all that exists in the physical world. So it is yet more difficult to describe than the world we find on entering the region of dream consciousness. I would like now to give you an idea of how one's consciousness in this realm works, and of its actual effects.

Anyone who describes that sublime world into which our dreams find their way, and about which I have given the merest hint, will be labeled a fantastic visionary by the bigoted intellectualism of today. If anyone begins to speak of that still higher realm through which man ordinarily sleeps, then people, if they take any notice at all, do not stop at abusing him as a visionary. They altogether lose their heads. We have already had an example of this. When my books were first published in Germany, the critics, who are supposed to represent the intellectual culture of today, attacked them with all sorts of insinuations. In one point, however, their criticism ran absolutely wild; in fact, they became foolish in their fury. I mean the point where I had to call attention to something that could only

originate in the spiritual realm we are now considering. This was the question of the two Jesus children mentioned in my book, *The Spiritual Guidance of Mankind*.

For those of our friends who have not heard of this I may say once more that it appeared as a result of occult research, namely, that at the beginning of our era not only one but two Jesus children were born. One was descended from the so-called Nathan line of the House of David, the other from the Solomon line. These two children grew up side by side. In the body of the Solomon child lived the soul of Zarathustra. In the twelfth year of the child's life this soul passed over into the other Jesus child and lived in that body until its thirtieth year. Here we have a matter of the deepest significance. Zarathustra's soul went on living in the body that until its twelfth year had been occupied by a mysterious soul. And then, only from the thirtieth year onward, there lived in this body the Being Whom we call the Christ, Who remained on earth altogether for three years.

We really cannot take amiss the reaction of the critics to this statement, as it is natural that they should want to have something to say about the matter from their scholarly viewpoint. But what they set out to criticize comes from a realm in which they are always fast asleep! So we cannot expect them to know anything about it. Yet a healthy human understanding is able to grasp this fact. People only will not give themselves a chance to understand. In their haste they change their power of understanding into bitterness and fury.

Such truths as that about the two Jesus children, which are to be found in this higher realm, never have anything to do with sympathy and antipathy. We *find* such truths; we never experience them in the way we gain experience in the usual manner of knowledge in the physical world, or even in the realm of dream life. In both these areas *we are there*, so to say. We are present at the origin of our knowing or perception. This is true also of those occultists who are conscious only as far as the realm of dreams. We can say that a person witnesses the birth of his knowledge, of his perceptions, in that realm, but truths like this concerning the two Jesus children can never be found in this way. When truths come to us in that higher realm and enter our consciousness, the moment in which we actually acquired them has long since passed. We experienced them long before we met them with our full consciousness, as we have to do in our time. We have them already in us. So that when we reach these truths — the most important, the most living and essential of all truths — we distinctly have the feeling that when we gained them we were in an earlier

time than the present; that we are now drawing out of the depths of our soul what we acquired in an earlier time and are bringing it into our consciousness. Such truths we *discover in ourselves*, just as in the outer world we come across a flower or any other object. Even as in the outer world we can think about an object that is simply there before us, so can we think about these truths when we have discovered them in ourselves, in our own self.

In the outer world we can only judge an object after we have perceived it. In the same way we find those sublime truths *objectively in ourselves*, and only then do we study them, in ourselves. We inwardly investigate them as we investigate the external facts of nature. Just as it would have no meaning to ask of a flower whether it is true or false, there would be no sense in asking about these truths that we simply come upon in ourselves, whether they are true or false. Truth and falsehood only come into the picture when it is a question of our power to describe what we find or what arises in our consciousness. *Descriptions can be true or false*. Truth and falsehood do not concern the facts, they concern the manner in which any thinking being approaches or deals with those facts. Thus, when we do research and get results in this realm we are really looking into a region of the soul we have lived in before but did not look into with our consciousness.

In carrying on our occult exercises we are best able to enter this realm if we pay positive attention to those moments when from the depths of our soul not mere judgments arise, but facts; facts that we know we did not consciously take part in originating. The more we are able to wonder at the things there unveiled, like the objective things of the outer world, the more astonishing it all is for us, the better are we prepared to enter into this realm. So, as a general rule, we do not make a good entrance if we have all sorts of conjectures and constructions in our minds. For example, there is no better way of finding nothing at all about the previous incarnations of some person than to speculate as to who they may have been earlier. Let us say you wanted to investigate the earlier incarnations of Robespierre. The best way of finding out nothing at all about him would be to search about for historical personalities you think might possibly have been his previous incarnations. In that way you never can discover the truth. You must get out of the habit of making conjectures and theories and forming opinions.

He would become a true occultist who would set himself to making as few judgments as possible about the world because then he will most quickly attain the condition in which the facts can meet him. The more a man cultivates silence in his conjectures and opinions, the more will his soul be filled with the actual truths of the spiritual world. Someone, for example, who had grown up with a particular religious bias, with definite feelings and ideas or perhaps views about the Christ — such a person in general would not be the most adapted to discover a truth like the history of the two Jesus children. Just when one feels a little neutral about the Christ event one is well prepared for such a discovery, provided of course he has made all the other necessary preparations. People with a Buddhistic bias will least easily be able to talk sense about Buddha, just as those with a Christian bias will least easily be able to talk sense about Christ. This is always true.

If we would enter into the third realm just described, it is necessary that we go through all the bitterness — for in ordinary life we cannot help feeling it in this way — of becoming, so to say, a twofold person. We are, in fact, twofold beings in ordinary life, even if we make no conscious use of the one-half of our existence, for we are both waking and sleeping beings. Different as these two conditions are, so is that third realm in the higher worlds different from this physical world. That realm has a peculiar existence of its own. There also we are surrounded by a world, but one so altogether new and different that we get to know it best if we extinguish not only the sense impressions of this world of ours but even our feelings and sentiments and all the things that have the power to arouse our passions and enthusiasms. In ordinary life man is so little fitted for conscious experience of that higher world that his consciousness is extinguished every night. He can only attain experience there if he is able to become a twofold man. Those who have the power at will to forget and to blot out all their interests in this physical world, are then able to enter that higher realm. The world between — that is to say, where our dreams are woven — is made of the materials of both worlds, it is penetrated by reflections of the higher worlds of which man is generally not aware, and by reminiscences of ordinary consciousness. That is why no one can perceive the true causes of events in the physical world who is not able to penetrate with understanding into that third realm.

Now if a man of today wishes to discover through his own experience who Krishna is, he can only make that discovery in the third realm. Arjuna's impressions, which in the sublime Gita are described to us through the words of Krishna, have their origin in that world. For this reason I have had

to prepare the way today by speaking of man's ascent into the third realm. Only so will you be able to understand the origin of the strange and wondrous truths that Krishna speaks to Arjuna — truths that sound so altogether different from anything that is spoken in ordinary life.

These lectures are to help us gain knowledge of Krishna; that is to say, of the very essence of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Also, the occult principles of this wonderful Song are to give you something which, if you really make use of it, can enable you to find the way into the higher worlds because the way is open to every man. We have only to realize that the grain of gold with which we must begin is ours once we are aware of how many things there are in which the highest spiritual beings live and work and are interwoven in our everyday life.



Lecture 5

June 01, 1913

IF WE WOULD penetrate into the mysteries of human life we must fix our attention on a great law of existence, I mean what is called the cyclic law. As a rule it is better to explain and describe than to define. In this case also I prefer to explain by definite concepts what is meant by the cyclic course of life, for alongside the actual reality a definition must always appear scanty and lacking in substance. A philosophic school in Greece, wishing to gain insight into the nature of definitions, once set out to give a definition of man. As you know, definitions are intended to provide concepts corresponding to the phenomena of experience, but those having logical insight cannot help feeling the poverty and unfruitfulness of this process. The members of the Greek school eventually agreed to define man as a featherless biped. While this particular definition sounds rather like a silly epigram it does represent the nature of man in certain respects. The next day one of the members of this school brought in a plucked hen and said to the company, "According to your definition this is a man." A silly way to show the unreality of attempts to define things. Being concerned with realities we will proceed then to describe things in their essential characteristics.

To begin, we will consider a cycle familiar in everyday life, that of our waking and sleeping. What does it really signify? We can only understand the nature of sleep if we realize that in the present epoch the soul activity of man's waking life brings about a continual destruction of delicate structures in the nervous system. With our every thought and with every impulse of will that arises in us under the stimulus of the outside world, we are destroying delicate forms in our brain. In the near future it will more and more be realized how sleep has to supplement our waking day life. We are approaching the point where natural science will join with spiritual science in these matters. Natural science has already produced more than one theory to the effect that our waking life brings a kind of destructive process to nerves and brain. Owing to this fact we have to allow the corresponding reverse process, the compensation, to take place during sleep.

While we are asleep forces are at work in us that do not otherwise manifest themselves, of which we remain unconscious. They are busy reconstructing the finer nerve structures of our brain. Now it is this very destruction that enables us to have processes of thought, and to acquire knowledge. Ordinary knowledge would not be possible if processes of disintegration did not take place in us during our waking hours. Thus, two opposite processes are at work in our nervous system — while we are awake a process of destruction, during sleep a repairing process. Since it is to the destructive process that we owe our consciousness, it is that process we perceive. Our waking life consists in perceiving disintegrating processes. During sleep we are not conscious because no destructive process is at work in us. The force, which at other times creates our consciousness, is in sleep used up in constructive work. There you have a cycle.

Let us now consider what happens during sleep. Because of this alternating cycle of build-up and break-down processes we see why it is so dangerous to health to go without proper sleep. Certainly man's life is so arranged that the danger is not immediately apparent, because what is present in him at any one time has been built up in him for a considerable time before. Thus, the abnormal processes cannot affect his nature as deeply as we might imagine. We could expect people who suffer from sleeplessness to go to pieces quickly, but they do not collapse nearly so quickly. The reason for this is the same as that which holds for people both blind and deaf, like the famous Helen Keller, whose intellect can nevertheless be developed. In the present age this should theoretically be impossible, for what constitutes the greater part of our intelligence enters the brain through eyes and ears. The reason for Miss Keller's intellectual development is that, though the portals of her senses are closed, she has inherited a brain that has the potentiality for development. If man were not an hereditary being such a case as hers would not be possible. Which is to say, if man did not have a much healthier brain through heredity than we generally give him credit for, sleeplessness would in a very short time completely undermine his health. But people mostly have so much inherited strength that insomnia can persist for a long time without seriously injuring them. It remains true, however, that the cycle of construction with its resulting unconsciousness in sleep, and destruction with its consciousness in waking life, fundamentally takes place.

In the totality of human life we perceive not only these smaller cycles but larger ones as well. Here I will call your attention to a cycle I have often mentioned before. Anyone who follows the course of life in the Western world will observe a quite definite configuration of the spiritual life of

mankind in the period from the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to the last third of the nineteenth. In ordinary life these developments are observed much too vaguely and inaccurately, but if we look into them deeply enough we shall see how, in all directions since the last third of the nineteenth century, there have been signs of an altogether different form of Western spiritual life. Of course, we are at the beginning of this new trend so people do not notice it in its full significance. Just imagine someone trying to speak before such an audience as this, say for instance in the 40's or 50's of the nineteenth century, about the same things I am putting before you here. It is quite unthinkable. It would be absurd. It would have been out of the question to speak of these things as we do now, at any time from the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to the last third of the nineteenth. This was the period when the natural scientific mode of thought, the way of thinking that produced the great materialistic achievements, reached its height. The stragglers of scientific intellectualism will go on adhering to it for some time to come, but the actual epoch of materialism is past.

Just as the era of scientific thought began about the fifteenth century, so the era of spiritual thought is now beginning. These two sharply differentiated epochs meet in the very time in which we are living. It will more and more become evident how the new mode of thought has to come in touch with the reality of things. Thought will become very different from the thought of the last four centuries, though the latter had to be so in its time. During this period man's gaze had to be directed outward into the far spaces of the universe. I have often spoken of the great significance for Western spiritual evolution of that moment when Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and Giordano Bruno together burst open the blue vault of heaven. Until their time it was believed that the blue cup of the heavens was suspended over our earth. These great thinkers declared that this hollow cup did not really exist. They taught mankind to look out into the infinite distances of cosmic space.

Now what was it that was so significant about Bruno's deed in explaining to men how the blue sphere they had set as the boundary of their power of sight was not really there; when he said, "You have only to realize that it is you yourselves who project it out into space?" The important point was that it marked the beginning of an epoch, which came to an end with the discovery that by means of the spectroscope one could investigate the material composition of the farthest heavenly bodies. A marvelous epoch, this epoch of materialism! Now we are at the starting point of another epoch, one that has its origin in the same laws of growth as the preceding

one but that nevertheless is to be the epoch of spirituality. Just as the epoch of natural science was prepared by Bruno's work in breaking through the limits of space, so will the firmament of *time* be broken through in the age now beginning. Mankind, imagining life to be enclosed between birth and death, or conception and death, will learn that these are only boundaries set by the human soul itself. Just as in earlier times men had themselves set as the boundary of their senses a blue sphere above them, and then of a sudden their vision expanded into the infinite spheres of space, so will the boundaries of time be broken through, those of birth and death. Set free of these there will lie before man's gaze in the infinite sea of time all the changes in the kernel of man's being as he follows it through its repeated incarnations. Thus a new age is beginning, the age of spiritual thought.

Now if we can recognize the occult basis of these transitions from one age to another, where shall we see the cause of this change in human thought? It is not anything that philosophy or external physiology or anatomy can find of their own accord. Yet it is true that forces that have entered the active souls of men and are being used today to gather spiritual knowledge — these same forces, during the last four centuries, have been working at man's organism as constructive forces. Throughout the period from Copernicus to the last third of the nineteenth century mysterious forces were at work in man's bodily organism just as constructive forces work in his nervous system during sleep. These forces were building up a definite structure in certain parts of the brain. The brains of Western people are different from what they were five centuries ago. What is under man's skull today does not have the same appearance as it had then, for a delicate organ has been formed which was not there before. Even though this cannot be proved externally, it is true. Under the human forehead a delicate organ has developed, and the forces building it have now fulfilled their task. In the coming cycle of history we are now approaching it will become evident in more and more people. Now that it is there, the forces that built it are liberated. With these very forces Western humanity will be gaining spiritual knowledge. Here we have the occult physiological foundation of the matter. Already we are beginning to work with these forces that men could not use during the last four hundred years because they were spent in building up the organ needed to allow spiritual knowledge to take its place in the world.

Let us imagine a man of the seventeenth or eighteenth century. As he stands there before us we know that certain occult forces are at work behind his forehead, transforming his brain. These forces were perpetually

at work in all the people of the West. Now let us assume that this man had managed to suspend these forces for a moment, made them cease their work. The same thing would have happened to him — and it did happen in certain cases — as takes place when in the middle of his sleep a man suspends the forces that ordinarily work at building up the nerve structures of the brain; he lets them run loose. It is possible to experience moments when we seem to waken in sleep, and yet do not waken, for we remain motionless, we cannot move our limbs, we have no external perception. But we are awake. In the moments of free play of those regenerating forces we can use them for clairvoyant vision; we can see into the spiritual worlds. A similar thing happened if a man two hundred years ago suspended the constructive activity on his brain. From the fifteenth to the nineteenth century he saw what was working into his brain from the spiritual worlds, so that from the twentieth century onward men might raise themselves to spiritual vision.

There were always isolated persons who had such experiences; experiences of truly catastrophic force, indescribably impressive. There were always people who for moments lived in what was working in from the super-sensible to bring forth in the sense world what did not exist in former cycles of evolution, the finer organ in the frontal cavity. Such men saw the Gods; spiritual beings at work in the building process of the human organism. In this we see clairvoyance described from a fresh aspect. We can bring about such moments during sleep by practicing the exercises I have given in my book, *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, and thereby gain glimpses of spiritual life such as are described in my book, *A Road to Self-Knowledge*. Thus it is possible during a given cycle of evolution for the forces at work preparing the future to become free for a moment and become clairvoyantly visible.

We may give a name to these forces — for what are names? We can call them *the forces of Gabriel*. But the point is to gain a moment's insight into the super-sensible where we perceive a spiritual Being working from those worlds into the human organism. A sum of forces, in fact, directed by a Being, Gabriel, of the hierarchy of the Archangels. From the fifteenth to the last third of the nineteenth century the Gabriel force was at work on man's organism, and because of this the power to understand the spiritual slept for awhile. It was this sleep of spiritual understanding that brought forth the great triumphs of natural science. Now this force is awakened. The spiritual has done its work; the Gabriel forces have been liberated. We can now use them, for they have become forces of the soul. Here we have a cycle of somewhat greater significance than that of waking and sleeping.

There are, however, even mightier cycles in human evolution. We may note how self-consciousness, the pride of mankind in this era of our post-Atlantean age, was not always there but had to be developed gradually. Today the word evolution is often heard, but people seldom take it in real earnest. We can sometimes have strange experiences of people's naïveté in regard to what surrounds them, so simply do they allow many things to play up from their subconsciousness into their conscious life and do not easily reach the point of attributing a super-sensible origin to what enters their known world from the unknown. In the last few days I have again come across a curious instance of the logic that stops halfway. We can well understand why the anthroposophical outlook meets with so much resistance when we bear in mind that a certain special habit of thought is needed to understand anthroposophy. I mean the habit of never stopping halfway along any line of thinking. I have here a *Freethinker's Calendar*, published in Germany. The first edition came out last year. In it a perfectly sincere person attacks the custom of teaching children religious ideas. He points out that this is contrary to the child's nature, since he himself has observed that when children are allowed to grow up on their own they develop no religious ideas. Therefore it is unnatural to inculcate these ideas into children. Now we can be certain that this *Calendar* will reach hundreds of people who will imagine that they understand how senseless it is to teach children religion. There are many such arguments today, and people never notice their complete lack of logic. In reply we need only ask, "If children for some reason have lived all their lives on an island alone and have not learned to speak, ought we therefore to refrain from teaching them to speak?" That would be the same kind of logic. Of course, people will not admit it is the same since they found it so profound in the first instance. It is curious to observe things like this on the broad horizon of external life today; things that represent some after-play from the materialist age that is passing.

I have here another example, some remarkable essays recently published by Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States of America. There is one on the laws of human progress. He points out how men are influenced by the dominant thought of their age; how in Newton's time, when everything was permeated with the idea of gravity, the effects of Newton's theories could be felt in social concepts, even in political terminology, though actually these theories are only applicable to the heavenly bodies. The idea of gravity was especially extended in its influence. All this is true. We need only read the literature of Newton's time to find everywhere words like "attraction" and "repulsion." Wilson develops this point very

ingeniously. He says how unsatisfactory it is to apply purely mechanical concepts, as of celestial mechanism, to human life and conditions. He shows how human life at that time was completely imbedded in these ideas and how widely they influenced political and social affairs, and he rightly denounces this application of purely mechanical laws in an age when Newtonism drew all thought under its yoke. "We must think along different lines," says Wilson, and then proceeds to construct his own concept of the state. Now he does it in such a way that, after all he has said about Newtonism, he himself allows Darwinism to speak through every page of his writing. In fact, he is naive enough to admit it. He says the Newtonian concepts were not sufficient, we must apply the Darwinian laws of the organism. Here we have a living instance of the way people march through the world today with half thought-out logic because in reality the laws derived purely from the living organism are *also* insufficient. We need laws of the soul and spirit. Thus we understand how objections are piled up against anthroposophical thought, for this requires an all-pervading thinking, a logic that penetrates to the core and does not stop halfway. This is just the virtue of the anthroposophical outlook. It forces its devotees to think in an orderly manner.

So we must think of evolution in the spiritual sense, not in Wilson's Darwinistic sense. We must realize that the self-consciousness that today is the essential characteristic of mankind, this firm rooting in the ego, has only gradually developed. This too had to be prepared, just as our spiritual thinking was being prepared in the last four centuries. Spiritual forces had to work down from the super-sensible worlds in order to develop what afterward found expression in the self-conscious life of men. In this connection we can speak of a break in evolution, with a preceding and a succeeding epoch. We will call the latter the age of self-consciousness.

This period is preceded in the cyclic interchange by one in which the organ of self-consciousness was being built into man from the super-sensible worlds. What now works as a soul force in self-consciousness was then working unrecognizably in the depths of human nature. The junction of these two great epochs is an important point in evolution. Before this time most people had no self-consciousness at all. Even in the most advanced it was comparatively weak. People then did not think as they do today, with the awareness, "I am thinking this thought." Their thoughts rose up like living dreams. Nor did their impulses of will and feeling enter their consciousness as they do today. They lived more of an instinctive life in their souls. From the spiritual worlds, however, beings were working into man's organism, preparing it for a later time when it would be capable of

self-consciousness. Meanwhile people had to live quite differently then, even as external experience is quite different between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries A.D. from what it will become later on. So we must say that until the period when self-consciousness entered the human soul everything that could prepare the way for it had been flowing into the life of man.

Thus, for example, in the region where self-consciousness was first to make its appearance, men were strictly divided into castes. They respected this division. A man born in a lower caste felt it as his highest endeavor so to order his life within that caste that he might raise himself in later incarnations into higher ones. It was a mighty driving force in the evolution of the human soul. Men knew that by developing their soul forces they were making themselves fit to rise into a higher caste in their next life. So too they looked up to their ancestors and saw in them what is not bound to the physical body. They revered their ancestors, feeling that although they had died their spiritual part remained, working on spiritually after death. This ancestor worship was a good preparation for the mighty goal of human nature because in it they could see what is now living already in us — the self-conscious soul, which is not bound to the physical body and passes through the gates of death into the spiritual worlds.

Just as during four centuries the kind of education that forced men to think out natural science was the best education toward spirituality, so in that ancient time mankind was best educated by the inspiration of great reverence for their castes and their ancestors. Men developed a strong liking for the system of castes. In that pious reverence they had something that worked into their lives with great power and deeply affected them. Spiritual beings were working into it, preparing for the future possibility for a man to say with every thought, "*I think,*" with every feeling, "*I feel,*" with every impulse of will, "*I will.*"

Now let us imagine that toward the end of that ancient epoch some mighty shock or upheaval in a man's life caused all the forces active then to suddenly cease binding him, suspending their action for a moment. Then he would experience what we can experience in sleep when for a moment we withdraw the constructive forces and become clairvoyant. Or what men of the eighteenth century could experience by suspending the forces then at work on their brain structure. If in that ancient time a man withdrew his understanding and feeling for the fires of sacrifice and reverence for his ancestors, if he experienced such a shock, he could for a moment use those forces to gaze into the super-sensible worlds. He could

then see how the self-consciousness of man was being prepared from the spiritual world. This is what Arjuna did when at the moment of battle he experienced such a shock. The usually constructive forces stood still in him, and he could look upward to the divine being who was preparing the way for self-consciousness. This divinity was Krishna.

Krishna then is that being who has worked through centuries and centuries on the human organism, to make man capable — from the seventh and eighth centuries B.C. onward — of entering gradually the epoch of self-consciousness. What kind of impression does he make, this master-builder of the human ego-nature? He has to speak to Arjuna in words saturated through and through with self-consciousness.

Thus from another side we understand Krishna as the divine architect of what prepared and brought about self-consciousness in man. The *Bhagavad Gita* tells us how under special circumstances a man could come into the presence of this divine builder of his nature. There we have one aspect of Krishna's nature. In the succeeding lectures we shall learn to know yet another aspect.



Lecture 6

June 02, 1913

IT REALLY is exceedingly difficult in our Western civilization to speak intelligently and intelligibly about such a work as the *Bhagavad Gita*. This is so because at present there is a dominating tendency to interpret any spiritual work of this kind as a kind of doctrine, an abstract teaching, or a philosophy, that makes it hard for people to come to a sound judgment in such matters. They like to approach such spiritual creations from the ideal or conceptual point of view. Here we touch upon something that makes it most difficult in our time to gain a true judgment about the great historical impulses in mankind's evolution. How often, for instance, it is pointed out that this or that saying occurring in the Gospels as the teaching of Christ Jesus is to be found in some earlier work no less profoundly expressed. Then it is said, "You see, it is the same teaching after all." Certainly, that is not incorrect because in countless instances it can be shown that the teachings of the Gospels occur in earlier spiritual works. Yet, though such a statement is not incorrect, it may be nonsense from the standpoint of a truly fundamental knowledge of human evolution. People's thinking will have to get accustomed to this and realize that a statement can be perfectly correct and yet nonsense. Not until this is no longer regarded as a contradiction will it be possible to judge certain matters in a really unbiased way.

Suppose, for instance, someone says that he sees in the *Bhagavad Gita* one of the greatest creations of the human spirit, a creation that has never been surpassed in later times. Suppose further, having said this, he adds, "Nevertheless, what entered the world with the revelation inherent in the Christ Impulse, is something altogether different, something to which the *Bhagavad Gita* could not attain even if its beauty and greatness were increased a hundred times." These two statements do not contradict each other. According to the habits of modern abstract thinking, however, we may have a contradiction here. Yet, in no sense is it in truth a contradiction. Indeed one might go further, and ask, "When was that mightiest word spoken that may be regarded as giving the impulse to the human ego, so that it may take its place in the evolution of man?" That significant word was uttered at the moment Krishna spoke to Arjuna; when he poured into Arjuna's ears the most powerful, incisive, burning

words to quicken the consciousness of self in man. In the whole range of the world's life there is nothing to be found that kindled the self of man more mightily than the living force of Krishna's words to Arjuna. Of course, we must not take those words in the way words are so often taken in Western countries where the noblest words are given merely an abstract, philosophic interpretation. In any such we would certainly miss the essence of the *Bhagavad Gita*. In this way Western scholars today have so outrageously misused and tortured the *Bhagavad Gita*. They have even gone so far as to dispute whether it is more representative of the Sankhya philosophy or of some other school of thought. In fact, a distinguished scholar, in his edition of this poem, has actually printed certain lines in small type because in his view they ought to be expunged altogether, having crept in by mistake. He thinks nothing is really a part of the *Gita* except what accords with the Sankhya, or at the most with the Yoga philosophy.

It may be said though that no trace is to be found in this great poem of philosophy as we speak of it today. At most one could say that in ancient India certain basic dispositions of soul developed into certain philosophic tendencies. These really have nothing to do with the *Bhagavad Gita*, at least not in the sense of being an interpretation or exposition of it. It is altogether unfair to the intellectual and spiritual life of the East to set it side by side with what the West knows as philosophy because there was no philosophy in the East in the same sense there is philosophy in the West. In this respect the spirit of our age, just beginning, is as yet imperfectly understood.

In the last lecture we spoke of things that men still have to learn. Above all we must firmly realize how the human soul, under certain conditions, can actually meet the Being whom we tried to describe from a certain aspect, calling him Krishna. We must realize how Arjuna meets that Spirit who prepared the age of self-consciousness. This knowledge is far more important than any dispute as to whether it is Sankhya or Vedic philosophy that is contained in the *Bhagavad Gita*. To understand it as a real description of world history — of history and of the color and temper of a particular age in which living, individual beings are placed before us — is the important point. We have tried to describe their natures, speaking of Arjuna's thoughts and feelings as characteristic of that time, trying to throw light on the new age of self-consciousness, and showing how a creative Spiritual Being preparing for a new age appeared before Arjuna.

Now, if we seek a living picture of Spiritual Beings in their relation to each other, we need an all-around point of view to know this Krishna Being more exactly. The following may therefore help us complete our picture of him.

To really penetrate into the region where we can perceive such a mighty being as Krishna one must have progressed far enough to be able to have real perceptions and real experiences in the spiritual world. That may seem obvious. Yet when we consider what people generally expect of the higher worlds the matter is by no means so self-evident. I have often indicated that misunderstandings without number arise from the fact that people wish to lift their lives into the super-sensible world carrying a mass of prejudices with them. They desire to be led along the path into the super-sensible toward something already familiar to them in the sense world. In that higher realm one perceives, for instance, forms, not indeed of gross matter, but forms that appear as forms of light. One finds that he hears sounds like the sounds of the physical world. He does not realize that by *expecting* such things, by entering the higher world with such preconceived ideas, he is wanting a spiritual world just like the sense world though in a refined form. In our world here man is accustomed to color and brightness, so he imagines he will only reach the higher realities if the Beings there appear to him in the same way. It ought not to be necessary to say all this since the super-sensible beings are far above all attributes of the senses and in their true form do not appear at all with sense qualities because the latter presuppose eyes and ears, that is, sense organs. In the higher worlds, however, we do not perceive by means of sense organs but by soul organs.

What can happen in this connection I can illustrate by a childish comparison. Suppose I am describing something to you, verbally. Then I feel impelled to represent it with a few strokes on the blackboard, thereby materializing what I have expressed in words. No one would dream of taking the diagram for the reality. It is the same when we express what we have experienced supersensibly by giving it form and color and stamping it in words borrowed from the sense world. Only that in doing so we do not use our ordinary intellect, but a higher faculty of feeling that thus translates the super-sensible into sense terms. In such a way our soul lives into invisible worlds, for instance into that of the Krishna Being. Then it feels the need of representing to itself that Being. What it represents, however, is not the Being himself but a kind of sketch, a super-sensible diagram. Such sketches, super-sensible illustrations so to say, are Imaginations. The misunderstanding that so often arises amounts to this, that we sensualize what the higher forces of the soul sketch out before us.

By thus interpreting it sensually we lose its real essence. The essence is not contained in these pictures, but through them it must be dimly felt at first, until by slow degrees we actually begin to see it.

I have mentioned among other things the wonderful dramatic composition of the *Bhagavad Gita*. I tried to give an idea of the form of the first four discourses. This same dramatic impulse increases from one discourse to the next as we penetrate on and on into the realms of occult vision. A sound idea of the artistic composition of this poem may be suggested by looking to see if there is not a central point, a *climax* to this increase of force and feeling. There are eighteen discourses, therefore we might look for the climax in the ninth. In fact, in the ninth one, that is in the very middle, we read these striking words, "And now, having told thee everything, I will declare to thee the profoundest secret for the human soul." Here indeed is a strange saying that seems to sound abstract yet has deep significance. Then there follows this most profound mystery. "Understand me well. I am in all beings, yet they are not in me."

How often men ask today, "What is the judgment of true mystic wisdom about this or that?" They want absolute truths, but actually there are no such truths. There are only truths that hold good in certain contexts, that are true in definite circumstances and under definite conditions. Then they *are* true. This statement, "I am in all beings but they are not in me," cannot be taken as an abstractly, absolutely true statement. Yet this was spoken out of the deepest wisdom of Krishna at the time when he stood before Arjuna, and its truth is real and immediate, referring to Him Who is the creator of man's inmost being, of his consciousness of self.

Thus, through a wonderful approach we are carried on to the central point of the *Gita*, to the ninth discourse where these words are poured out, to Arjuna. Then, in the eleventh discourse, another element enters. What may we expect here, realizing the artistic form of the poem and the deep occult truths contained in it? When we take up the ninth and tenth discourses, the very middle of the poem, we notice a remarkable thing — a peculiar difficulty in imagining and bringing to life in our souls the ideas presented to us in this part of the song.

As you begin with the first discourse your soul is borne along by the continually increasing current of feeling and idea. First, immortality is the subject. Then you are uplifted and inspired by the concepts awakened through Yoga. All the time your feeling is being borne along by something in which it can feel at home, one may say. We go still further and the poem

works up in a wonderful way to the concept of Him Who inspired the age of self-consciousness. Our enthusiasm is kindled as we approach this Being. All this time we are living in definite, familiar feelings. Then comes a still greater climax. We are told how the soul can become ever more free of the outer bodily life. We are led on to the idea, so familiar to the man of India, of how the soul can retire into itself, realizing inaction in the actions the body experiences. The soul can become a complete whole, independent of outer things as it gradually attains Yoga and becomes one with Brahma. In the succeeding discourses we see how our certainty of feeling — the feeling that can still gain nourishment from daily life — gradually vanishes. Then as we approach the ninth discourse our soul seems to rise into giddy heights of unknown experience. If now in these ninth and tenth discourses we try to make the ideas borrowed from ordinary life suffice, we fail, As we reach this part of the song we feel as if we were standing on a summit of mankind's attainment, born directly out of the occult depths of life. If we are to understand it, we must bring to it something our soul in its development has first to attain by its own effort.

It is remarkable how fine and unerring the composition of the *Bhagavad Gita* is in this respect. We can get as far as the fifth, sixth, or seventh discourse by developing the concepts given us at the very beginning, in the first discourse. In the second our soul is awakened to realize the presence of the eternal in the ever-changing flow of appearance. Then follows all that passes into the depths of Yoga, from the third song onward. After that an altogether new mood begins to appear. Whereas the first discourses still have an intellectual quality, reminding us at times of the Western philosophic mode of thinking, something enters now that requires Yoga, the devotional mood, for its understanding. As we continue purifying more and more this mood of devotion, our soul rises higher in reverence. The Yoga of the first discourses no longer carries us. It ceases, and an altogether new mood of soul bears us up into the ninth and tenth discourses because the words here spoken are no more than a dry, empty sound echoing in our ear if we approach them intellectually. But they radiate warmth to us if we approach them devotionally. One who would understand this sublime poem may start with intellectual understanding and so follow the opening discourses, but as the song proceeds toward the ninth a deep devotional mood must be awakened in him. Then the words of the mighty Krishna will be like wonderful music echoing and re-echoing in his soul. Whoever reaches this ninth song may feel this devotional mood as if he must take off his shoes before treading on holy ground; there he

feels he must walk with reverence. Then follows the eleventh discourse. What can come next, now that we have reached the climax of this devotional mood?

When man has risen to the summit where Krishna has led Arjuna — a height that cannot be attained except in occult vision or in reverent devotion — it can only be the holy and formless, the super-sensible, that appears before him. Then the super-sensible can be poured out into Imagination. Then the uplifted and strengthened soul-force that belongs not to the realm of the intellect but to imaginative perception, can cast into living pictures what in its essential being is without form or likeness. This is what happens at the beginning of the second half of the sublime song — that is to say, about the eleventh discourse. Here, after due preparation, the Krishna Being to whom Arjuna has been led step by step, is conjured up before his soul in Imaginations. This is where the majesty of description in this Eastern poem appears in its fullness, where Krishna finally appears in a picture, in an Imagination.

We may truly say that experiences such as this, which only the innermost power of the human soul can undergo, have almost nowhere else been described in such a wonderful way, so filled with meaning. For those who are able to realize it the Imagination of Krishna as Arjuna now describes it will always be of most profound significance. Up to the tenth discourse we are led on by Krishna as by an inspiring Being. Now the radiant bliss of Arjuna's opened vision comes before us. Arjuna becomes the narrator, and describes his Imagination in words so wonderful that one fears to reproduce them.

"The Gods do I behold in all thy Frame, O God. Also the hosts of creatures; Brahma the Lord upon His lotus throne; the Rishis all; the Serpent of Heaven. With many arms and with many bodies, with many mouths and many eyes I see Thee, on every side endless in Thy Form. No end, no center, no beginning see I in Thee, O Lord of All! Thou, Whom I behold in every form, I see Thee with diadem, with club and sword, a mountain flaming fire, streaming forth on every side — thus do I behold Thee. Dazzled is my vision. As fire streaming from the radiance of the Sun, immeasurably great art Thou! Lost beyond all thought, unperishing, greatest of all Good, thus dost Thou appear to me in the Heaven's expanse. Eternal Dharma's changeless guardian, Thou! Spirit primeval and Eternal, Thou standest before my soul. Neither source, nor midst, nor end; in-. finite in power, infinite in realms of space. Great are Thine eyes like to the Moon; yea, like to the Sun itself. And what streams forth from Thy

mouth is as the Fire of Sacrifice. I look upon Thee in Thy glowing Fire; Thy splendor, warming all worlds. All that I can dream of between floor of earth and fields of Heaven, Thy power fills it all. Alone with Thee I stand. And that heavenly universe wherein the three worlds live, that too doth in Thee dwell, when to my gaze is shown Thy wondrous, awesome Form. I see whole hosts of Gods approaching Thee, hymning Thy praise. Stricken with fear I stand before Thee, folding my hands in prayer. 'Hail to Thee!' cry all the companies of holy seers and Saints, chanting Thy praises with resounding songs. Filled with wonder stand multitudes beholding Thee. Thy Form stupendous with many mouths, arms, limbs, feet, many bodies, many jaws full of teeth — before it all the universe doth quake, and I with dread am filled. Radiant, Thou shakest Heaven. With many arms I see Thee, and mouth like to vast-flaming eyes. My soul trembles. Nothing firm I find, nor rest, O Mighty Krishna, Who art as Vishnu unto me. I see within Thine awful form, like unto fire itself. I see how Being works, the end of all the ages. Nought know I anywhere; no shelter I find. O, be Thou merciful to me, Thou Lord of all the Gods, refuge of all the worlds!"

Such is the Imagination that Arjuna beholds when his soul has been raised to that height where an Imagination of Krishna is possible. Then we hear what Krishna is echoing across to Arjuna once more as a mighty inspiration. In reality it is as if it were not merely sounding for the spiritual ear of Arjuna, but echoing down through all the ages that followed. At this point we begin dimly to perceive what it really means when a new impulse is given for a new epoch in the world's history, and when the author of this impulse appears to the clairvoyant gaze of Arjuna. We feel with Arjuna. We remind ourselves that he is in the midst of the turmoil of battle where brother-blood is pitted against its like. We know that what Krishna has to give depends above all upon the old clairvoyant epoch ceasing, together with all that was holy in it, and a new epoch to begin. When we reflect on the impulse of this new epoch that was to begin with fratricide; when we rightly understand the impulse that forced its way in through all the swaying concepts and institutions of the preceding epoch; then we get a correct concept of what Krishna lets Arjuna hear.

"I am time primeval, bringing all worlds to naught, made manifest on earth to slay mankind! And even though thou wilt bring them unto death in battle, without thee hath death taken all the warriors who stand there in their ranks. Therefore arise; arise without fear. Renown shalt thou win, and shalt conquer the foe. Rejoice in thy mastery, and in the victory awaiting thee. It is not thou who wilt have slain them when they fall in battle. By Me already are they slain, e'er thou lay them low. The instrument art thou,

nought else than he who fighteth with his arm. The Drona, the Jayandana, the Bhishma, the Karna and the other heroes of the strife I have slain. Already they are slain, now do thou slay, that My work burst forth externally apparent. When they fall dead in Maya, slain by Me, do thou slay them. And what I have done will through thee become perceptible. Tremble not! Thou canst not do what I have not already done. Fight! They whom I have slain will fall beneath thy sword!"

It was not in order to bring to mankind's ears the voice that should speak of slaying that these words were uttered, but to make them hear the voice that tells that there is a center in man's being that has to develop in the age to come; that into this center there were focused the highest impulses realizable by man at that time, and that there is nothing in human evolution with which the human ego is not connected. Here we find in the *Bhagavad Gita* something that lifts us up and sets us on the horizon of the whole of human evolution.

If we let the changing moods of this great poem work upon us we shall gain much more than those who try to read into it pedantic doctrines of Sankhya or Yoga philosophies. If we can only dimly feel the dazzling heights that can be reached through Yoga, we shall begin to lay hold on the meaning and spirit of such a mighty Imagination as that of Arjuna presented to us here. Even as an image it is so sublime and forceful that we are able to form some lofty conception of the creative spirit, which in Krishna is grafted onto the world. The highest impulse that can speak to the individual man speaks through Krishna to Arjuna. The highest to which the individual man can lift himself by raising to their full pitch all the powers that reside within his being — that is Krishna. The highest to which he can soar by training himself and working on himself with wisdom — that is Krishna.

When we think of the evolution of humanity all over the earth, and trace it through as we are able to do by means of what is given, for example, in our occult science; when in this sense we see the earth as the place where man has first been brought to the ego through many different stages following one another and developing from age to age; when we thus follow the course of evolution through the epochs of time; then we may say to ourselves that here then on earth these souls have been planted; the highest they can attain is to become *free souls*. Free — that is what men will become if they bring to full development all the forces latent within them as individual souls. In order to make this possible Krishna was active, indirectly and almost imperceptibly at first, then ever more

definitely, and at last quite directly in the period we have been describing. In all of earthly evolution there is no Being who could give *the individual human soul* so much as Krishna.

I say expressly the individual soul because — and I say this deliberately — on earth there exists not only the individual human soul but also *mankind*. Consider this in connection with all I have tried to give about Krishna, because on earth there are all those concerns that do not belong to the individual alone. Imagine a person feeling the inner impulse to perfect himself as far as ever a human soul can. Such might be. Then, each person separately and by himself might go on developing indefinitely. But there is mankind. For this earthly planet there are matters that bring it into connection with the whole universe. With the Krishna Impulse coming into each individual soul, let us assume every soul would have developed in itself a higher impulse; not immediately, nor even up to the present time, but sometime in the future. So that from the age of self-consciousness onward the stream of mankind's collective evolution would have split up. Individual souls would have progressed and unfolded to the highest point, but separately, dispersed, broken apart from each other. Their paths would have gone further and further apart as the Krishna Impulse worked in each one. Human existence would have been uplifted in the sense that souls individualized themselves and so lifted themselves out of the common current, developing their self-life to the utmost. In this way the ancient time would have shone into the future like many, many rays from a single star. Every one of these rays would have proclaimed the glory of Krishna far into future cosmic eras. This is the path on which mankind was traveling in the sixth or eighth centuries before the foundation of Christianity.

Then from the opposite side something else came in. The Krishna Impulse comes into man's soul when from the depths of his own inner being he works, creates, and draws forth his powers more and more until he may rise into those realms where he may reach Krishna. But something came toward humanity *from outside*, which men could never have reached through the forces that lived within themselves; something bending down to each individual one. Thus the souls that were separating and isolating themselves encountered the same Being who came down out of the Cosmic Universe into the age of self-consciousness from outside. It came in such a way that it belonged to the whole of humanity, to all the earth. This other impulse came from the opposite side. It was the Christ.

Though put rather abstractly for the present, we see how a continually increasing individualization was prepared and brought about in mankind, and how then those souls who had the impulse to individualize themselves more and more were met by the Christ Impulse, leading them once more together into a common humanity. What I have tried to indicate has been a rather preliminary description of the two impulses from the Christ and Krishna. I have tried to show how closely the two impulses come together in the age of the mid-point of evolution, even though they come from diametrically opposite directions. We can make very great mistakes by confusing these two revelations. What I have developed today in a rather general way we will make more concrete in the succeeding lectures. But I would close today with a few words that may simply and clearly summarize what these two impulses are — truly the most important in human evolution.

If we look back to all that happened between the tenth century before Christ and the tenth century afterward, we may say that into the universe the Krishna Impulse flowed for every individual human soul, and into the earth the Christ Impulse came for all mankind.

Observe that for those who can think specifically, "all mankind" by no means signifies the same as the mere sum total of all individual human souls.



Lecture 7

June 03, 1913

IT IS NATURAL, though it is usually ignored by science, that man as he is simply cannot know one part of his being. As he looks out upon the world it shows itself, roughly expressed, as an ascending scale from the mineral kingdom through the plant and animal kingdoms up to man. It goes without saying that man must assume some *creative force* behind all the forms he perceives around him in the kingdoms of nature. The point is, however, that man gains knowledge of the world he lives in just because the mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms are outside him and he can observe them. As to all man has within himself, however, he can only gain knowledge of that insofar as the same forces are at work in him as are active in the three kingdoms of nature outside him. The forces active within him which *transcend* those three kingdoms he cannot know by the usual methods of knowing nature — not in the least. It is just what man has within himself over and above the kingdoms of nature that enables him to build up systematically a knowledge of those kingdoms outside him. Just as little as the eye, whose purpose it is to see outwardly, can see itself, just so little can man gain knowledge of what in himself is there in order that he may acquire knowledge. This is a very simple idea, but sound.

It is impossible for the eye to see itself because it is there to see out, and it is impossible for those forces in man that are there to acquire outer knowledge, to acquire knowledge of themselves. Further, it is these very forces that represent what it is in man that makes him something more than an animal. Materialistic Darwinism disposes of this fact easily by simply leaving out of account the fact that this special human power of acquiring knowledge itself cannot be known by man's usual instrument for knowledge. Recognizing that this power is unknowable, science denies its existence and accordingly considers man only insofar as he is still animal. You see on what the peculiar fallacy, the illusion of materialistic Darwinism rests. Man cannot know in himself those forces that are the actual means of knowledge. But the eye *can* see another eye, and for this reason, other things being equal, it can believe in itself. With the faculty of knowledge this is not the case. It would be *logically* possible for a man to confront another man and perceive in him the knowing faculty that raises him above

animals. Logically, that is. But even that is actually impossible, for the very reasons implied in what we have described previously about the effects of thinking.

What does ordinary knowledge involve in the external world? We saw that it involves a perpetual destruction of the nerve structures in the brain. This is an actual external process. The creative forces on the other hand — those that really distinguish man from the animal — cannot develop at all in our waking life when we normally acquire knowledge. In this life they must behave so as not to interfere with the wearing away of the nerve structures. Therefore in waking life these forces are at rest. They sleep.

We have recognized a great truth if we can thoroughly enter into the thought that all that would have to be known to realize the full fallacy of materialistic Darwinism, even on the physical plane, is actually asleep in our waking life; that what raises man above the animal is at rest and a destructive process is taking place. The creative forces that bring forth the animal organism are not so far perfected as those at work in the organism of man. In our waking life the latter are inactive, and the process that takes their place is perpetually destroying just what in man transcends the animal. These very creative forces are destroyed during waking life. They are not present at all, but during sleep they appear and begin building up again what has been destroyed. These creative forces that raise man above the animal can really be perceived in a sleeping man. So we should have to say that whatever it is that repairs in sleeping man the forces he spends in his waking life, must be the forces that raise him above the animals.

These forces are still unknown to external natural science, which is only beginning to surmise them. Science, however, is on the way and one day will reveal these forces by purely external methods. Indeed, there are already exceptions to the statement that the forces leading man out beyond the animal nature are ordinarily unobservable in him. When science once learns to distinguish these forces in man it will discover in the sleeping human body the physical evidence of man's transcending the animal kingdom. When it distinguishes the regenerative forces in man from what is present in the animal kingdom also, it will recognize how the creative forces active in the earth's life to raise man beyond the animal are awake only when man sleeps. From all this we can gather that in self-knowledge man's creative forces, the real human forces, can only be

perceived by man when he becomes clairvoyant during sleep; that is, when in a condition otherwise like sleep he awakes clairvoyantly. In the fifth lecture we already indicated this fact.

Today I have said that to some extent, from the processes observable in sleeping man, science will after a time find indications of the forces whereby man transcends the animal, but they will only be indications. These forces, when they appear to clairvoyant consciousness today, are seen to be of such a nature that they cannot be revealed externally to the senses in their true form. It will be possible to indicate their existence by deductions from scientific facts. Apart from their not being perceptible in their essence there is quite another reason why it will become possible to discover them if not to perceive them. These human creative forces have a very special relation to all the other forces of nature. We are here approaching a difficult subject, but it may be possible to make it clear in the following way.

Let us imagine we have here the receiver of an air-pump, say a glass bell-jar, and suppose we succeed in making a really perfect vacuum inside it. That is very nearly possible ordinarily. Everyone whose intellect is bound to the world of sense will now say, "Inside there is no air, only an empty space; we cannot go any farther, there cannot be less than no air inside." Actually that is not true. We can pump until no air at all is left, then go on pumping until we get a space still more empty of air than a vacuum. People dependent on the material will find it difficult to imagine this "less than nothing." Or, suppose you have ten shillings in your pocket. You can gradually spend them until you have nothing left. In this domain of life there is a real "less than nothing." It is often one of the strongest realities — you can go into *debt* for a few shillings. In practical life less-than-nothing is often more intensely real than the reality of possession.

It is remarkable what things are sometimes accepted as axioms, as obvious truths. Thus, you can read in many Western philosophic books that there can nowhere be less than nothing, that there is no such thing. Even more, it is sometimes said that nothing itself cannot exist. Yet, what exists in our illustration about debt exists also in the universe. All philosophic dicta about "nothing," however pretentious the form they take, are really rubbish. They are themselves a kind of ill-defined nothingness. It is true that the physical something that surrounds us can be reduced to nothing, and then still further to *less than nothing*. This "nothing" actually is a real factor on all sides. We must imagine the world that surrounds us, which we know in the forces of nature throughout the mineral, plant, and animal

kingdoms, reduced down to nothing, then down to below nothing. Then it is that those forces arise that are creatively active in man when he sleeps. Natural science knows only the external side of these forces. In fact, it holds fast to a mere abstraction about them and therefore cannot enter into or appreciate them because ordinary science is to the reality in the forces of nature as the abstract number ten, for example, is to ten beans or ten apples. If we eliminate quality and say that all these are "ten" and nothing else, we are doing what natural science does, making no distinctions, touching only the surface of things. Suppose it gains the idea that regenerative forces must be present building up the organism again in sleep, then it will treat these forces as does a man who, when someone meets him saying, "I have fifteen shillings in my pocket," replies, "Not so, you have *fifteen*." The man leaves out of account the very thing that matters. Consequently science will confuse these forces with the ordinary natural laws, and will fail to recognize that higher laws are at work in them.

I mention all this to show what difficulties external science has and must have in getting to know the truth. It will draw certain conclusions and thus come near the truth. For some persons this will not be necessary, because science will gradually be supplemented by clairvoyant perception that does experience the difference between these forces and those active out in the three kingdoms of nature. At present I cannot deal fully with the superficial objection that animals also sleep. Such objections have little logical value but people do not notice it, nor their superficiality, for they judge according to concepts instead of the real nature of things. By introducing animal sleep into the argument one would speak the same fallacy as if someone were to say, "I sharpen my pencil with a knife and I also shave with a knife," and another person replied, "That is impossible, knives are there to cut meat." People are always making that kind of judgment. They think that a given thing must have the same function in different realms of nature. Sleep is an altogether different function in man from what it is in the animals.

I wanted to call your attention to forces at work in man's nature that we find at first in the regeneration of his organism as he sleeps. Now these forces are closely related to other forces, those that also develop in man with a certain unconsciousness. I mean the forces having to do with the propagation of the race. We know that up to a certain age man's consciousness is filled with a pure and straightforward unconsciousness of these forces; the innocence of childhood. Then at a certain age this

consciousness awakens. From that time onward the human organism is permeated by an awareness of the forces afterward known as sensual sex-love.

What in earlier life lives as a sleeping force and only wakens with puberty, seen in its original and essential form is the very same as those forces that in sleep regenerate the outworn forces in man. Only they are hidden by the other parts of human nature in which they are mingled. Invisibly in man there are at work forces that can become capable of either good or evil only when they awaken, but that sleep, or at most dream, until the time of puberty. Since the forces that manifest themselves afterward must first be prepared, they are intermingled, though not yet awake, with the remaining forces in man even from birth onward. All this time his nature is permeated by these sleeping forces. This is what meets us in the child as such a wonderful mystery. It is the sleeping generative forces that only waken later on. One who is sensitive to these things feels something like a gentle breath of God in the activity of these forces withdrawn into reticence in childhood, whatever the naughtiness, obstinacy and other more or less unpleasant characteristics a child may have. These innocent qualities of the child are those of the grown-up person, but in childlike form. One who recognizes them as among the generative forces feels the breath of divine powers. While in later life they appear in man's lower nature, they are so wonderful because they really breathe the pure breath of God so long as they work in unconscious innocence. We must feel these things and be sensitive to them, then we shall perceive how wonderfully human nature is composed. The generative forces, sleeping during the most tender age of childhood, waken around the time of puberty, and from then on are still active in innocence when at night man sinks back into sleep.

Thus man's nature falls into two parts. In every human being two persons confront us — the one that we are from the time we waken until we go to sleep, the other, from going to sleep to waking again. In our waking state we are continually at pains to wear and worry our nature down to the animal level with all that is not pure knowledge, pure spiritual activity. What raises us above humanity holds sway like a pure, sublime force within the generative powers as they were during innocent childhood, and then in sleep it is awakened in the regeneration of what is worn away in waking life. So we have in ourselves one person who is related to the creative forces in man, and another who destroys them.

The deeply significant thing in the double nature of man is, that behind all that the senses perceive we have to surmise another man, one in whom the creative forces dwell. This second man is really never there in a pure, unmixed form; not during waking life nor even in sleep because in sleep the physical and etheric bodies still remain permeated by the after-effects of waking life, by the disturbing and destructive forces. When at last the latter have been removed altogether, we wake up again.

So it has been since what we call the Lemurian Age, the beginning, strictly speaking, of present-day mankind's evolution. At that time, as is described in greater detail in my *Occult Science* the Luciferic influence on man set in; and from this influence there came, among other things, what today compels man continually to wear and tear himself down to the animal nature. The other element that exists in human nature, which man as he is now does not yet know — the creative forces in him — all this came into play in the early Lemurian time before the Luciferic impulses entered. Thus we rise in thought from man 'become' to man 'becoming;' from man created to man being re-created. In so doing we have to look out into that distant Lemurian time when man was as yet wholly permeated by the creating forces. At that time man came into being as he is today. If we follow the human race from that epoch onward, we have this double nature of man continually before us in all that has happened since. Man then entered a kind of lower nature.

At the same time, as we can see clairvoyantly by looking back into the Akashic record, there appeared beside ordinary people, who themselves were permeated by the human creative forces, something like a brother- or sister-soul; a definite soul. It was as though this sister-soul was held back, not thrown into the current of human evolution. It remained permeated through and through by human creative forces *only*, and by nothing else. Thus, a brother- or sister-soul (in that ancient time there was no difference) — Adam's brother-soul — remained behind. It could not enter the physical process of mankind's development. It lived on, invisible to the physical world of man. It was not born as men are born, in the flowing stream of this life, because if it had entered into birth and death it would have been in the processes of physical human life. It could only be perceived by those who rose to the heights of clairvoyance, who developed those forces that awaken in the state we otherwise know as sleep. In that state man is near to the forces that live and work in purity in the sister-soul.

Man entered his evolution, but holding sway above this life there lived, in sacrifice, a soul that throughout all the processes of human life never came down in bodily form. It did not strive like ordinary human souls for birth and death in successive incarnations, and it could only show itself to them when in their sleep they attained clairvoyant vision. Yet it worked on mankind wherever they could meet it with special clairvoyant gifts. There were men who either by nature or special training in schools of initiation had this power and were able to recognize the creative forces. Wherever such schools are mentioned in history we can always find evidence that they were aware of a soul accompanying mankind. In most instances it was only recognizable in those special conditions of clairvoyance that expand man's spiritual vision into sleep consciousness.

When Arjuna stood on the battle-field with the Kurus and Pandus arrayed against each other, when he felt all that was going on around him and deeply realized the unique situation in which he was placed, it came about that this soul we have mentioned spoke to him through the soul of his charioteer. The manifestation of this special soul, speaking through a human soul, is none other than Krishna. For what soul was it that could instill into man the impulse to consciousness of self? It was the soul that had remained behind in the old Lemurian age when men entered his actual earthly evolution.

This soul had often been visible in manifestations before, but in a far more spiritual form. At the moment, however, of which the *Bhagavad Gita* tells us, we have to imagine a kind of embodiment, though much concealed in Maya of this soul of Krishna. Later on in history a definite incarnation takes place. This soul actually incarnated in the body of a child. Those of our friends to whom I have spoken of this before know that at the time when Christianity was founded two children were born in different families, both from the house of David. The one child is mentioned in St. Matthew's Gospel, the other in St. Luke's. This is the true reason for the external discrepancies between the two Gospels. Now this very Jesus Child of St. Luke's Gospel is an incarnation of that same soul that had never before lived in a human body but is nevertheless a human soul, having been one in the ancient Lemurian age. This is the same that revealed itself as Krishna.

Thus we have all that the Krishna impulse signifies incarnated in the body of the Luke Jesus child. What was there embodied is related to the forces that are asleep in every child in their sublime purity and innocence, until they awaken as the sex-forces. In this child they can manifest themselves

and be active until the age of puberty when man ordinarily becomes sexually mature. But the *body* of this child that had been taken from common humanity would no longer have been adapted to the forces related to the innocent sex-forces in the child. Thus the soul in the other Jesus child, which was the soul of Zarathustra, that had passed through many incarnations and reached its eminence by hard work and special striving, passed over into the body of the Luke Jesus child, and from then on dwelt in that body.

We touch here upon a wonderful mystery. We see how into the body of the Luke Jesus child there enters the soul of man as he was before he descended into the course of earthly incarnations. We understand that this soul could hold sway in the human body only until the twelfth year of its life. After that another soul must take possession, the Zarathustra soul that had gone through all the transformations of mankind. This wonderful mystery is enacted, that the innermost essence and self of man, which we have seen hailed as Krishna, permeates the Jesus child of the Luke Gospel. In this child are the innermost forces of humanity, the Krishna forces, for indeed we know their origin. This Krishna root takes us back into the Lemurian time, the very primeval age of man. At that time it was one with humanity, before ever the physical evolution of mankind began. In later time this root, these Krishna forces, flowing together and uniting in the unknown and unseen, worked to bring about the unfolding of man's inner being from within. Concretely embodied, this root is present within a single being, the Luke Jesus child, and as the child grows up it remains active beneath the surface of life in this special body after the Zarathustra soul has entered it.

In the thirtieth year, in the moment the Bible describes as the Baptism in Jordan, there comes toward this special human body what now belongs to all mankind. This is the moment indicated in the words, "This is my well-beloved Son, this day have I begotten Him." Christ now comes toward the physical body from the other side. In the body that stands before us there, we have in concrete form what yesterday we thought of abstractly. What belongs to all mankind comes to the body that contains what, through another impulse, has brought the inner being of man to the highest ideal of individual strength, and will carry it to yet greater heights.

I think when you consider all that has been said today, leading up as it does to a certain understanding of that great moment pictorially represented as the baptism by St. John, you will have to admit that our anthroposophical outlook takes nothing away from the sublime majesty of

the Christ-Idea. On the contrary, by shedding the light of understanding upon it much is added to all that can be given -to mankind exoterically. Today I have endeavored to present the matter in such a way as to give it sense and meaning for those who can consider it with an open mind, in the light of external human history. That is not the way, however, by which this secret was found. Someone might ask, in view of the lectures about St. Luke's Gospel I delivered years ago in Basel, when for the first time I drew attention to the different genealogies of the two Jesus children, "Why did you not explain then all you have added to it now?" That depends on the whole way these things were discovered. Actually, this truth has never yet been found in one single and complete whole by the human understanding. It was not discovered in the form I have tried to convey it today. The truth itself was there first, as I indicated in a lecture a few days ago, and the rest followed of its own accord, adding itself to the main body of this piece of knowledge about the two Jesus-children. From this you may gather that in the Anthroposophical Movement for which I am permitted to stand before you, there is nothing of the nature of intellectual or logical construction. I do not mean to lay this down as a general rule for everybody, but I do regard it as my own personal task to say nothing that is given by the intellect as such but to take things in the way they are directly and immediately given to occult vision. Only afterward are they permeated with the power of understanding, The truth about the two Jesus-children was not discovered by external historical research, but from the beginning it was an occult fact. Afterward the connection with the Krishna mystery was revealed.

You see in this how the science of man will have to work into the occult realm in the age we are entering; how the fundamental impulses of earthly evolution will gradually be understood and realized by individual persons, and how this will throw more and more light on all that has happened in the past. True science will not only speak to the intellect, but will fill the whole soul of man. It is just when we make ourselves acquainted with occult facts that we have a feeling for the real majesty, the greatness and wonder of these facts. Truly, the more deeply we penetrate the world of reality the more we have this feeling of wonder. Not only our intellect and reason but our whole soul is illumined when we let the truth come to us in this way. Especially at such a point as this, that wondrous event when the whole inwardness of humanity lived in a human body; when a soul that had developed upward to this point through the whole course of earthly life took possession of this body; then from outside there came into this body during three years of its life something that was vouchsafed to all mankind

from the great universe beyond. Truly this can stir our souls to their depths. The spiritual age that is dawning will in time make it possible to deepen points like this still more.

One thing is essential to the coming spiritual age. We must learn to take a different attitude toward the great riddles and secrets of the cosmos, to approach them not as in the past with reason and intellect alone, but with all the faculties of our soul. Then we shall ourselves become partakers in the whole of human evolution. It will be for us like a fountain of sublime, all-human consciousness. We shall have fullness of soul. We shall feel that we may belong to that humanity that over all the earth is to develop such impulses as have been the subject of our thoughts today.



Lecture 8

June 04, 1913

IF WE WANT to approach such a creation as the sublime *Bhagavad Gita* with full understanding it is necessary for us to attune our souls to it, so to say; bring them into that manner of thought and feeling that really lies at the basis of such a work. This is especially true for people who, through their situation and circumstances, are as far removed from this great poem as are the people of the West. It is natural for us to make a contemporary work our own without much difficulty. It is also natural that those who belong to a certain nation should always have an immediate feeling for a work that has sprung directly out of the substance of that nation, even though it might belong to a previous age. The population of the West (not those of southern Asia), however, is altogether remote in sentiment and feeling from the *Bhagavad Gita*.

If we would approach it then with understanding we must prepare ourselves for the very different mood of soul, the different spirit that pervades it. Such appalling misunderstandings can arise when people imagine they can approach this poem without first working on their own souls. A creation coming over to us from a strange race, from the ninth or tenth century before the foundation of Christianity, cannot be understood as directly by the people of the West as, say, the *Kalevala* by the Finnish people, or the Homeric poems by the Greeks. If we would enter into the matter further we must once more bring together different materials that can show us the way to enter into the spirit of this wonderful poem.

Here I would above all draw attention to one thing. The summits of spiritual life have at all times been concealed from the wide plain of human intelligence. So it has remained, in a certain sense, right up to our present age. It is true that one of the characteristics of our age, which is only now dawning and which we have somewhat described, will be that certain things hitherto kept secret and really known to but very few will be spread abroad into large circles. That is the reason why you are present here, because our movement is the beginning of this spreading abroad of facts that until now have remained secret from the masses. Perhaps some subconscious reason that brought you to the anthroposophical view of the world and into this spiritual movement came precisely from the feeling that

certain secrets must today be poured out into all people. Until our time, however, these facts remained secret not because they were deliberately kept so, but because it lay in the natural course of man's development that they had to remain secret. It is said that the secrets of the old Mysteries were protected from the profane by certain definite, strictly observed rules. Far more than by rule, these secrets were protected by a fundamental characteristic of mankind in olden times, namely, that they simply could not have understood these secrets. This fact was a much more powerful protection than any external rule could be.

This has been, for certain facts, especially the case during the materialistic age. What I am about to say is extreme heresy from the point of view of our time. For example, there is nothing better protected in the regions of Central Europe than Fichte's philosophy. Not that it is kept secret, for his teachings are printed and are read. But they are not understood. They remain secrets. In this way much that will have to enter the general development of mankind will remain occult knowledge though it is published and revealed in the light of day.

Not only in this sense but in a rather different one too, there is a peculiarity of human evolution that is important concerning those ideas we must have in order to understand the *Bhagavad Gita*. Everything we may call the mood, the mode of feeling, the mental habit of ancient India from which the *Gita* sprang, was also in its full spirituality accessible to the understanding of only a few. What one age has produced by the activity of a few, remains secret in regard to its real depth, even afterward when it passes over and becomes the property of a whole people. Again, this is a peculiar trait in the evolution of man, which is full of wisdom though it may at first seem paradoxical. Even for the contemporaries of the *Bhagavad Gita* and for their followers, for the whole race to which this summit of spiritual achievement belongs, and for its posterity, its teaching remained a secret. The people who came later did not know the real depth of this spiritual current. It is true that in the centuries following there grew up a certain religious belief in its teachings, combined with great fervor of feeling, but with this there was no deepening of perception. Neither the contemporaries nor those who followed developed a really penetrating understanding of this poem. In the time between then and now there were only a few who really understood it.

Thus it comes about that in the judgment of posterity what was once present as a strong and special spiritual movement is greatly distorted and falsified. As a rule we cannot find the way to come near to an

understanding of some reality by studying the judgments of the descendants of the race that produced it. So, in the deep sentiments and feelings of the people of India today we will not find real understanding for the spiritual tendency that in the deepest sense permeates the *Bhagavad Gita*. We will find enthusiasm, strong feeling and fervent belief in abundance, but not a deep perception of its meaning. This is especially true of the age just passed, from the fourteenth and fifteenth to the nineteenth century. As a matter of fact, it is most especially true for the people who confess that religion. There is one anecdote that like many others reveals a deep truth — how a great European thinker said on his deathbed, "Only one person understood me, and he misunderstood me."

It can also be said of this age that has just run its course, that it contained some spiritual substance that represents a great height of achievement but in the widest circles has remained unknown as to its real nature, even to its contemporaries. Here is something to which I would like to draw your attention. Without doubt, among the present people of the East, and of India, some exceptionally clever people can be found. By the whole configuration of their mind and soul, however, they are already far from understanding those feelings poured out in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Consider how these people receive from Western civilization a way of thought that does not reach to the depths but is merely superficial understanding. This has a twofold result. For one, it is easy for the Eastern peoples, particularly for the descendants of the *Bhagavad Gita* people, to develop something that may easily make them feel how far behind a superficial Western culture is in relation to what has already been given by their great poem. In effect they still have *more* ways of approach to the meaning of that poem than to the deeper contents of Western spiritual and intellectual life. Then there are others in India who would gladly be ready to receive such spiritual substance as is contained, let us say, in the works of Solovieff, Hegel and Fichte, to mention a few of many spiritualized thinkers. Many Indian thinkers would like to make these ideas their own.

I once experienced something of this kind. At the beginning of our founding of the German Section in our movement an Indian thinker sent me a dissertation. He sent it to many other Europeans besides. In this he tried to combine what Indian philosophy can give, with important European concepts, such as might be gained in *real* truth — so he implied — if one entered deeply into Hegel and Fichte. In spite of the person's honest effort the whole essay was of no use whatever. I do not mean to say anything against it, rather I would praise his effort, but the fact is, what this man

produced could only appear utter dilettantism to anyone who had access to the real concepts of Fichte and Hegel. There was nothing to be done with the whole thing.

Here we have a person who honestly endeavors to penetrate a later spiritual stream altogether different from his own point of view, but he cannot get through the hindrances that time and evolution put in his way. Nevertheless, when he attempts to penetrate them, untrue and impossible stuff is the result. Later I heard a lecture by another person, who does not know what European spiritual evolution really is, and what its depths contain. He lectured in support of the same Indian thinker. He was a European who had learned the arguments of the Indian thinker and was bringing them forward as spiritual wisdom before his followers. They too of course were ignorant of the fact that they were listening to something which rested on a wrong kind of intellectual basis. For one who could look keenly into what the European gave out, it was simply terrible. If you will forgive the expression, it was enough to give one the creeps. It was one misunderstanding grafted onto another misunderstanding. So difficult is it to comprehend all that the human soul can produce. We must make it our ideal to truly understand all the masterpieces of the human spirit. If we feel this ideal through and through and consider what has just been said, we shall gain a ray of light to show us how difficult of access the *Bhagavad Gita* really is. Also, we shall realize how untold misunderstandings are possible, and how harmful they can be.

We in the West can well understand how the people of the East can look up to the old creative spirits of earlier times, whose activity flows through the Vedantic philosophy and permeates the Sankhya philosophy with its deep meaning. We can understand how the Eastern man looks up with reverence to that climax of spiritual achievement that appears in Shankaracharya seven or eight centuries after the foundation of Christianity. All this we can realize, but we must think of it in another way also if we want to attain a really deep understanding. To do so we must set up something as a kind of hypothesis, for it has not yet been realized in evolution.

Let us imagine that those who were the creators of that sublime spirituality that permeates the Vedas, the Vedantic literature, and the philosophy of Shankaracharya, were to appear again in our time with the same spiritual faculty, the same keenness of perception they had when they were in the world in that ancient epoch. They would have come in touch with spiritual creations like those of Solovieff, Hegel, and Fichte.

What would they have said? We are supposing it does not concern us what the adherents of those ancient philosophies say, but what those spirits themselves would say. I am aware that I am going to say something paradoxical, but we must think of what Schopenhauer once said. "There is no getting away from it, it is the sad fate of truth that it must always become paradoxical in the world. Truth is not able to sit on the throne of error, therefore it sits on the throne of time, and appeals to the guardian angel of time. So great, however, is the spread of that angel's mighty wings that the individual dies within a single beat." So we must not shrink from the fact that truth must needs appear paradoxical. The following does also, but it is true.

If the poets of the Vedas, the founders of Sankhya philosophy, even Shankaracharya himself, had come again in the nineteenth century and had seen the creations of Solovieff, Hegel and Fichte, all those great men would have said, "What we were striving for back in that era, what we hoped our gift of spiritual vision would reveal to us, these three men have achieved by the very quality and tenor of their minds. We thought we must rise into heights of clairvoyant vision, then on these heights there would appear before us what permeates the souls of these nineteenth century men *quite naturally*, almost as a matter of course!"

This sounds paradoxical to those Western people who in childlike unconsciousness look to the people of the East, comparing themselves with them, and all the while quite misunderstanding what the *West* actually contains. A peculiarly grotesque picture. We imagine those founders of Indian philosophy looking up fervently to Fichte and other Western thinkers; and along with them we see a number of people today who do not value the spiritual substance of Europe but grovel in the dust before Shankaracharya and those before him while they themselves are not concerned with the achievements of such as Hegel, Fichte and Solovieff. Why is this so? Only by such an hypothesis can we understand all the facts history presents to us.

We shall understand this if we look up into those times from which the spiritual substance of the *Bhagavad Gita* flowed. Let us imagine the man of that period somewhat as follows. What appears to a person today in varied ways in his dream-consciousness — the pictorial imagination of dream-life — was in that ancient time the normal content of man's soul, his everyday consciousness. His was a dreamlike, picture consciousness, by no means the same as it was in the Old Moon epoch but much more evolved. This was the condition out of which men's souls were passing on in the

descending line of evolution. Still earlier was what we call sleep-consciousness, a state wholly closed to us today, from which a kind of inspiration, dream-like, came to men. It was the state closed to us today during our sleep. As dream-consciousness is for us, so was this sleep-consciousness for those ancient men. It found its way into their normal picture-consciousness much as dream-consciousness does for us, but more rarely. In another respect also it was somewhat different in those times. Our dream-consciousness today generally brings up recollections of our ordinary life. Then, when sleep-consciousness could still penetrate the higher worlds, it gave men recollections of those spiritual worlds. Then gradually this consciousness descended lower and lower.

Anyone who at that time was striving as we do today in our occult education, aimed for something quite different. When we today go through our occult development we are aware that we have gone downhill to our everyday consciousness and are now striving upward. Those seekers were also striving upward, from their everyday dream-consciousness. What was it then that they attained? With all their pains it was something altogether different from what we are trying to attain. If someone had offered those men my book *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds* they would have had no use for it at all. What it contains would have been foolishness for that ancient time; it has sense only for mankind today. Then, everything those men did with their Yoga and the Sankhya was a striving toward a height that we have reached in the most profound works of our time, in those of the three European thinkers I have mentioned. They were striving to grasp the world in ideas and concepts. Therefore, one who really penetrates the matter finds no difference — apart from differences of time, mood, form, and quality of feeling — between our three thinkers and the Vedantic philosophy. At that time the Vedantic philosophy was that to which men were striving upward; today it has come down and is accessible to everyday consciousness.

If we would describe the condition of our souls in this connection we may say to begin with that we have a sleep-consciousness that for us is closed but for the ancient people of India was still permeated by the light of spiritual vision. What we are now striving for lay hidden in the depths of the future for them. I mean what we call Imaginative Knowledge, fully conscious picture-consciousness, permeated by the sense of the ego; fully conscious Imagination as it is described in *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*. So much for the technical point that should be inserted here. In these abstract technicalities lies something far more important, that if the man of today will only vigorously make use of the forces present in his

soul, what the men of the *Bhagavad Gita* era strove for with all their might lies right at his hand. It really does, even if only for a Solovieff, a Fichte or a Hegel. There is something more. What today can be found right at hand was in those ancient times attained by application of all the keenness of vision of Sankhya, and the deep penetration of Yoga. It was attained by effort and pain, by sublime effort to lift the mind.

Now imagine how different the situation is for a man who, for example, lives at the top of a mountain, has his house there and is continually enjoying the magnificent view, from that of a man who has never once seen the view but has to toil upward with trouble and pain from the valley. If you have the view every day you get accustomed to it. It is not in the concepts, in their content, that the achievements of Shankaracharya, of the Vedic poets, and of their successors are different from those of Hegel and Fichte. The difference lies in the fact that Shankaracharya's predecessors were striving upward from the valley to the summit; that it was their keenness of mind in Sankhya philosophy, their deepening of soul in Yoga, that led them there. It was in this work, this overcoming of the soul, that the experience lay. It is the experience, not the content of thought that is important here.

This is the immensely significant thing, something from which we may in a certain sense derive comfort because the European does not value what we can find right at hand. Europeans prefer the form in which it meets them in Vedantic and Sankhya philosophies, because there, without knowing it, they value the great efforts that achieved it. That is the personal side of the matter. It makes a difference whether you find a certain content of thought here or there, or whether you attain it by the severest effort of the soul. It is the soul's work that gives a thing its life. This we must take into account. What was once attained alone by Shankaracharya and by the deep training of Yoga can be found today right at hand, even if only by men like those we have named.

This is not a matter for abstract commentaries. We only need the power to transplant ourselves into the living feelings of that time. Then we begin to understand that the external expressions themselves, the outer forms of the ideas, were experienced quite differently by the men of that era from the way we can experience them. We must study those forms of expression that belong to the feeling, the mood, the mental habit of a human soul in the time of the *Gita*, who might live through what that great poem contains. We must study it not in an external philological sense, not in order to give academic commentaries, but to show how different is the

whole configuration of feeling and idea in that poem from what we have now. Although the conceptual explanation of the world — which today, to use a graphic term, lies below and then lay above — though the content of thought is the same, the form of expression is different. Whoever would stop with the abstract contents of these thoughts may find them easy to understand, but whoever would work his way through to the real, living experience will not find it easy. It will cost him some pains to go this way again and feel with the ancient man of India because it was by this way that such concepts first arose as those that flowed out into the words *sattwa*, *rajas*, *tamas*. I do not attach importance to the ideal concepts these words imply in the *Bhagavad Gita*, but indeed we today are inclined to take them much too easily, thinking we understand them.

What is it that actually lies in these words? Without a living sympathy with what was felt in them we cannot follow a single line of the poem with the right quality of feeling, particularly in its later sections. At a higher stage, our inability to feel our way into these concepts is something like trying to read a book in a language that is not understood. For such a person there would be no question of seeking out the meaning of concepts in commentaries. He would just set to work to learn the language. So here it is not a matter of interpreting and commenting on the words *sattwa*, *rajas*, *tamas* in an academic way. In them lies the feeling of the whole period of the *Gita*, something of immense significance because it led men to an understanding of the world and its phenomena. If we would describe the way they were led, we must first free ourselves from many things that are not to be found in such men as Solovieff, Hegel, and Fichte, yet lie in the widespread, fossilized thinking of the West. By *sattwa*, *rajas*, *tamas* is meant a certain kind of living one's way into the different conditions of universal life, in its most varied kingdoms. It would be abstract and wrong to interpret these words simply on the basis of the ancient Indian quality of thought and feeling. It is easier to take them in the true sense of the life of that time but to interpret them as much as possible through our own life. It is better to choose the external contour and coloring of these conceptions freely out of our own experience.

Let us consider the way man experiences nature when he enters intelligently into the three kingdoms that surround him. His mode and quality of knowledge is different in the case of each. I am not trying to make you understand *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas* exhaustively. I only want to help you to come a little nearer to an idea of their meaning. When man today approaches the mineral kingdom he feels he can penetrate it and its laws with his thinking, can in a certain sense live together with it. This kind

of understanding at the time of the *Gita* would have been called a *sattwa* understanding of the mineral kingdom. In the plant kingdom we always encounter an obstacle, namely, that with our present intelligence we cannot penetrate life. The ideal now is to investigate and analyze nature from a physical-chemical standpoint, and to comprehend it in this manner. In fact, some scientists spin their threads of thought so far as to imagine they have come nearer to the idea of life by producing external forms that imitate as closely as possible the appearance of the generative process. This is idle fantasy. In his pursuit of knowledge man does not penetrate the plant kingdom as far as he does the mineral. All he can do is to *observe* plant life. Now what one can only observe, not enter with intellectual understanding, is *rajas*-understanding. When we come to the animal kingdom, its form of consciousness escapes our everyday intelligence far more than does the life of a plant. We do not perceive what the animal actually lives and experiences. What man with his science today can understand about the animal kingdom is a *tamas*-understanding.

We may add something further. We shall never reach an understanding beyond the limits of abstract concepts if we consider only the concepts of science regarding the activity of living beings. Sleep, for example, is not the same for man and animal. Simply to define sleep would be like defining a knife as the same thing whether used for shaving or cutting meat. If we would keep an open mind and approach the concepts of *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattwa* once more from a different aspect we can add something else taken from our present-day life.

Man today nourishes himself with various substances, animal, plant, and mineral. These foods of course have different effects on his constitution. When he eats plants he permeates himself with *sattwa* conditions. When he tries to understand them they are for him a *rajas* condition. Nourishment from the assimilation of mineral substance — salts and the like — represents a condition of *rajas*; that brought about by eating meat represents *tamas*. Notice that we cannot keep the same order of sequence as if we were starting from an abstract definition. We have to keep our concepts mobile. I have not told you this to inspire horror in those who feel bound to eating meat. In a moment I shall mention another matter where the connection is again different.

Let us imagine that a man is trying to assimilate the outer world, not through ordinary science but by that kind of clairvoyance that is legitimate for our age. Suppose that he now brings the facts and phenomena of the surrounding world into his clairvoyant consciousness. All this will call forth

a certain condition in him, just as for ordinary understanding the three kingdoms of nature call forth conditions of sattwa, rajas and tamas. In effect what can enter the purest form of clairvoyant perception corresponding to purified clairvoyance, calls forth the condition of tamas. (I use the word "purified" not in the moral sense.) A man who would truly see spiritual facts objectively, with that clairvoyance that we can attain today, must by this activity bring about in himself the condition of tamas. Then when he returns into the ordinary world where he immediately forgets his clairvoyant knowledge, he feels that with his ordinary mode of knowledge he enters a new condition, a new relation to knowledge, namely, the sattwa condition. Thus, in our present age everyday knowledge is the sattwa condition. In the intermediate stage of belief, of faith that builds on authority, we are in the rajas condition.

Knowledge in the higher worlds brings about the condition of tamas in the souls of men. Knowledge in our everyday environment is the condition of sattwa; while faith, religious belief resting on authority, brings about the condition of rajas. So you see, those whose constitution compels them to eat meat need not be horrified because meat puts them in a condition of tamas because the same condition is brought about by purified clairvoyance. It is that condition of an external thing when by some natural process it is most detached from the spiritual. If we call the spirit "light" then the tamas condition is devoid of light. It is "darkness." So long as our organism is permeated by the spirit in the normal way we are in the sattwa condition, that of our ordinary perception of the external world. When we are asleep we are in tamas. We have to bring about this condition in sleep in order that our spirit may leave our body and enter the higher spirituality around us. If we would reach the higher worlds — and the Evangelist already tells us what man's darkness is — our human nature must be in the condition of tamas. Since man is in the condition of sattwa, not of tamas, which is darkness, the words of the Evangelist, "The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not," can be rendered somewhat as follows, "The higher light penetrated as far as man, but he was filled by a natural sattwa that he would not give up." Thus the higher light could not find entrance because it can only shine in darkness.

If we are seeking knowledge of such living concepts as sattwa, rajas, and tamas, we must get accustomed to *not* taking them in an absolute sense. They are always, so to say, turning this way and that. For a right concept of the world there is no absolute higher or lower, only in a relative sense. A European professor took objection to this. He translated sattwa as "goodness" and objected to another man who translated it as "light,"

though he translated *tamas* as "darkness." Such things truly express the source of all misunderstanding. When man is in the condition of *tamas* — whether by sleep or clairvoyant perception, to take only these two cases — then in effect he is in darkness as far as external man is concerned. So ancient Indian thought was right, yet it could not use a word like "light" in place of the word *sattwa*. *Tamas* may always be translated "darkness" but for the external world the *sattwa* condition could not always be simply interpreted as "light."

Suppose we are describing light. It is entirely correct to call the light colors — red, orange, yellow — in the sense of Sankhya philosophy the *sattwa* colors. In this sense too green must be called a *rajas* color; blue, indigo, violet, *tamas* colors. One may say effects of light and of clairvoyance in general fall under the concept of *sattwa*. Under the same concept we must also place, for example, goodness, kindness, loving behavior by man. It is true that light falls under the concept of *sattwa*, but this concept is broader; light is not really identical with it. Therefore it is wrong to translate *sattwa* as "light" though it is quite possible to translate *tamas* as "darkness." Nor is it correct to say that "light" does not convey the idea of *sattwa*.

The criticism that the professor made of a man who may have been well aware of this is also not quite justified, for the simple reason that if someone said, "Here is a lion," nobody would attempt to correct him by saying, "No, here is a beast of prey." Both are correct. This comparison hits the nail right on the head. As regards external appearance it is correct to associate *sattwa* with what is full of light, but it is wrong to say *sattwa* is only of light. It is a more general concept than light, just as beast of prey is more general than lion.

A similar thing is not true of darkness for the reason that in *tamas* things that in *rajas* and *sattwa* are different and specific merge into something more general. After all, a lamb and a lion are two very different creatures. If I would describe them as to their *sattwa* characters — the form that the natural element of life and force and spirit takes in lambs and lions — I would describe them very differently. But if I would describe them in the condition of *tamas* the differences do not come into consideration because we have the *tamas* condition when the lamb or lion is simply lying lazily on the ground. In the *sattwa* condition lambs and lions are very different, but for cosmic understanding the indolence of both is after all one and the same.

Our power of truly looking into such concepts must therefore adapt to much differentiation. As a matter of fact, these three concepts with the qualities of feeling in them are among the most illuminating things in the whole of Sankhya. In all that Krishna puts before Arjuna, when he presents himself as the founder of the age of self-consciousness, he has to speak in words altogether permeated by those shades of feeling derived from the concepts sattwa, rajas, and tamas. About these three concepts, and what at length leads to a climax in the *Bhagavad Gita*, we shall speak more fully in the last lecture of this course.



Lecture 9

June 05, 1913

THE LATTER part of the *Bhagavad Gita* is permeated by feelings and shades of meaning saturated with ideas of sattwa, rajas and tamas. In these last chapters our whole mode of thinking and feeling must be attuned so as to understand what is said in the sense of those three conditions. In the last lecture I sought to give an idea of those important concepts by making use of present-day experiences. Certainly anyone who enters deeply into this poem must perceive that since the time when it arose those concepts have shifted to some extent. Nevertheless, it would not have been correct to describe them simply by verbal quotations from the poem because our mode of feeling is different from what is contained there and we are unable to make those very different feelings our own. If we tried to we would only be describing the unknown by the unknown.

So in the *Bhagavad Gita* you will find with regard to food that the concepts we developed last time have shifted a little. What is true for man today about plant food was true for the ancient Indian of that food Krishna calls mild, gentle food. Whereas rajas food, which we described correctly for man today as mineral food (salt, for instance), would have been designated at that time as sour or sharp. For our constitution meat is essentially a tamas food, but the Indian meant by this something that could hardly be considered food at present, which gives us an idea of how different men were then. They called tamas food what had become rotten, had stood too long, and had a foul smell. For our present incarnation we could not properly call that tamas food because man's organism has changed, even as far as his physical body.

Thus, in order to understand these feelings of sattwa, rajas and tamas, so fundamental in the *Gita*, it is well for us to apply them to our own conditions. Now if we would consider what sattwa really is, it is best to begin by taking the most striking conception of it. In our time the man who can give himself up to knowledge as penetrating as our present knowledge of the mineral kingdom is a sattwa man. For the Indian he was not one who had such knowledge, but was one who went through the world with intelligent understanding as we would say, with heart and head in the right place. A man who takes without prejudice and bias the phenomena the

world offers. A man who always perceives the world with sympathy and conceives it with intelligence; who receives the light of ideas, of feelings and sentiments streaming out from all the beauty and loveliness of the world; who avoids all that is ugly, developing himself rightly. He who does all this in the physical world is a sattwa man. In the inorganic world a sattwa impression is that of a surface not too brilliant, illuminated in such a way that its details of color can be seen in their right lustre yet bright also.

A rajas impression is one where a man is in a certain way prevented by his own emotions, his impulses and reactions, or by the thing itself, from fully penetrating what lies around him, so that he does not give himself up to it but meets it with what he himself is. For example, he becomes acquainted with the plant kingdom. He can admire it, but he brings his own emotions to bear on it and therefore cannot penetrate it to its depths.

Tamas is where a man is altogether given up to his bodily life, so that he is blunt and apathetic toward his environment, as we are toward a consciousness different from our own. While we dwell on the physical plane we know nothing of the consciousness of a dog or a horse, not even of another human being. In this respect man, as a rule, is blunt and dull. He withdraws into his own bodily life. He lives in impressions of tamas. But man must gradually become apathetic to the physical world in order to have access to the spiritual worlds in clairvoyance. In this way we can best read the ideas of sattwa, rajas, and tamas. In external nature a rajas impression would be that of a moderately bright surface, say of green, a uniform green shade; a dark-colored surface would represent a tamas impression. Where man looks out into the darkness of universal space, when the beautiful spectacle of the free heavens appears to him, the impression he gains is none other than that blue color that is almost a tamas color.

If we saturate ourselves with the feeling these ideas give we can apply them to everything that surrounds us. These ideas are really comprehensive. For the ancient Indian, to know well about this threefold nature of his surroundings meant not only a certain understanding of the outer world, it also meant bringing to life his own inner being. He felt it somewhat as follows. Imagine a primitive country man who sees the glory of nature around him — the early morning sky, the sun and stars, everything he can see. He does not think about it however. He does not build up concepts and ideas about the world but just lives on in utmost

harmony with it. If he begins to feel himself an individual person, distinguishing his soul from his environment, he has to do so by learning to understand his surroundings through ideas about them.

To set up one's environment objectively before one is always a certain way of grasping the reality of one's own being. The Indian of the time of the *Bhagavad Gita* said, "So long as one does not penetrate and perceive the sattwa, rajas, and tamas conditions in one's environment, one continues merely to live in it. A person is not yet there, independently in his own being, but is bound up with his surroundings. However, when the world about him becomes so objective that one can pursue it everywhere with the awareness that this is a sattwa condition, this a rajas, that a tamas, then one becomes more and more free of the world, more independent in himself." This therefore is one way of bringing about consciousness of self. At bottom this is Krishna's concern — to free Arjuna's soul from all those things that surround him and are characteristic of the time in which he lives. So Krishna explains, "Behold all the life there on the bloody field of battle where brothers confront brothers, with all that thou feelest thyself bound to, dissolved in, a part of. Learn to know that all that is there outside you runs its course in conditions of sattwa, rajas and tamas. Then wilt thou contrast thyself with it; know that in thine own highest self thou dost not belong to it, and wilt experience thy separate being within thyself, the spirit in thee."

Here we have another of the beautiful elements in the dramatic composition of the *Bhagavad Gita*. At first we are gradually made acquainted with its ideas as abstract concepts, but afterward these become more and more vivid. The concepts of sattwa, rajas, and tamas take on living shape and form in the most varied spheres of life. Then at length the separation of Arjuna's soul from it all is accomplished, so to say, before our spiritual gaze. Krishna explains to him how we must free ourselves from all that is bound up with these three conditions, from that in which men are ordinarily interwoven.

There are sattwa men who are so bound up with existence as to be attached to all the happiness and joy they can draw from their environment. They speed through the world, drinking in their blissfulness from all that can give it to them. Rajas men are diligent, men of action; but they act because actions have such and such consequences to which they are attached. They depend on the joy of action, on the impression action makes upon them. Tamas men are attached to laziness, they want to be

comfortable. They really do not want to act at all. Thus are men to be distinguished. Those whose souls and spirits are bound into external conditions belong to one or other of these three groups.

"But thine eyes shall see the daybreak of the age of self-consciousness. Thou shalt learn to hold thy soul apart. Thou shalt be neither sattwa, rajas nor tamas man." Thus is Krishna the great educator of the human ego. He shows its separation from its environment. He explains soul activities according to how they partake of sattwa, rajas or tamas. If a man raises his belief to the divine creators of the world he is a sattwa man. Just in that time of the *Gita*, however, there were men who in a certain sense knew nothing of the Divine Beings guiding the universe. They were completely attached to the so-called nature spirits, those behind the immediate beings of nature. Such men are rajas men. The tamas men are those who in viewing the world get only so far as what we may call the ghost-like, which in its spiritual nature is nearest to the material. So, in regard to religious feeling also these three groups may be distinguished.

If we wished to apply these concepts to religious feeling in our time we should say (but without flattery) that those who strive after anthroposophy are sattwa men; those attached to external faith are rajas men; those who, in a material or spiritual sense, will only believe in what has bodily shape and form — the materialists and spiritualists — are the tamas men. The spiritualist does not ask for spiritual beings in whom he may believe; he is quite prepared to believe in them, but he does not want to lift himself up to them. He wants them to come down to him. They must rap, because he can hear rapping with physical ears. They must appear in clouds of light because such are visible to his eyes. Such are tamas men in a certain conscious sense, and quite in the sense too of the tamas men of Krishna's time.

There are also unconscious tamas men; the materialistic thinkers of our time who deny all that is spiritual. When materialists meet in conference today they persuade themselves that they adhere to materialism on logical grounds, but this is an illusion. Materialists are people who remain so not on the basis of logic but for fear of the spiritual. They deny the spirit because they are afraid of it. They are in effect compelled to deny it by the logic of their own unconscious soul, which does indeed penetrate to the door of the spiritual but cannot pass through. One who can see reality can see in a materialistic congress how each person in the depths of his soul is afraid of the spirit. Materialism is not logic, it is cowardice before the spiritual. All its arguments are nothing but an opiate to damp down this

fear. Actually, Ahriman — the giver of fear — has every materialist by the neck. This is a grotesque but an austere and fundamental truth that one may recognize if one goes into any materialistic meeting. Why is such a meeting called? The illusion is that people there discuss views of the universe, but in reality it is a meeting to conjure up the devil Ahriman, to beckon him into their chambers.

Krishna, then, indicates to Arjuna how the different religious beliefs may be classified, and he also speaks to him of the different ways men may approach the Gods in actual prayer. In all cases the temper of man's soul can be described in terms of these three conditions. Sattwa, rajas, and tamas men are different in the way they relate to their Gods. Tamas men are such as priests, but whose priesthood depends on a kind of habit. They have their office but no living connection with the spiritual world. So they repeat *Aum, Aum, Aum*, which proceeds from the dullness, the tamas condition of their spirit. They pour forth their subjective nature in the *Aum*.

Rajas men look out on the surrounding world and begin to feel that it has something in it akin to themselves, that it is related to them and therefore worthy to be worshipped. They are the men of "Tat" who worship the "That," the Cosmos, as being akin to themselves. Sattwa men perceive that what lives within us is one with all that surrounds us in the universe outside. In their prayer they have a sense for "Sat," the All-being, the unity without and within, unity of the objective and the subjective. Krishna says that he who would truly become free in his soul, who does not wish to be merely a sattwa, rajas or tamas man in any one respect or another, must attain to a transformation of these conditions in himself so that he wears them like a garment, while in his real self he grows out beyond them.

This is the impulse that Krishna as the creator of self-consciousness must give. Thus he stands before Arjuna and teaches him to "Look upon all the conditions of the world, with all that is to man highest and deepest, but free thyself from the highest and deepest of the three conditions and in thine own self become as one who lays hold of himself. Learn and know that thou canst live without feeling thyself bound up with rajas, or tamas, or sattwa." One had to *learn* this at that time because it was the beginning of the dawn in self-liberation, but here again, what then required the greatest effort can today be found right at hand. This is the tragedy of present life. There are too many today who stand in the world and burrow down into their own soul, finding no connection with the outer world; who in their feelings and all their inner experiences are lonely souls. They neither feel themselves bound up with the conditions of sattwa, rajas or

tamas, nor are they free from them, but are cast out into the world like an endlessly, aimlessly revolving wheel. Such men who live only in themselves and cannot understand the world, who are unhappy because in their soul-life they are separated from all external existence — these represent the shadow side of the fruit that it was Krishna's task to develop in Arjuna and in all his contemporaries and successors. What had to be Arjuna's highest endeavor has become the greatest suffering for many men today.

Thus do successive ages change. Today we must say that we are at the end of the age that began with the time of the *Bhagavad Gita*. This may penetrate our feelings with deep significance. It may also tell us that just as in that ancient time those seeking self-consciousness had to hear what Krishna told Arjuna, those seeking their soul's salvation today, in whom self-consciousness is developed to a morbid degree, these too should listen. They should listen to what can lead them once more to an understanding of the three external conditions. What can do this?

Let us put forward some more preliminary ideas before we set out to answer this question. Let us ask again, what is it that Krishna really wants for Arjuna, whose relation to external conditions was a right one for his time? What is it that he says with divine simplicity and naïveté? He reveals what he wishes to be even to our present time. We have described how a kind of picture-consciousness, a living imagery, lighted up man's soul; how there was hovering above it, so to say, what today is self-consciousness, which men at that time had to strive for with all their might but which today is right at hand. Try to live into the soul condition of that time before Krishna introduced the new age. The world around men did not call forth clear concepts and ideas, but pictures like those of our dreams today. Thus the lowest region of soul-life was a picture-like consciousness, and this was illumined from the higher region — of sleep consciousness — through inspiration. In this way they could rise to still higher conditions. This ascent was called "entering into Brahma." To ask a soul today, living in Western lands, to enter into Brahma would be a senseless anachronism. It would be like requiring a man who is halfway up a mountain to reach the top by the same way as one still down in the valley. With equal right could one ask a Western soul today to do Eastern exercises and "enter into Brahma" because this presupposes that a man is at the stage of picture consciousness, which as a matter of fact certain Easterners still are. What the men of the *Gita* age found in rising into Brahma, the Western man already has in his concepts and ideas. This is really true, that

Shankaracharya would today introduce the ideas of Solovieff, Hegel and Fichte to his revering disciples as the first stage of rising into Brahma. It is not the content, however, it is the pains of the way, that are important.

Krishna indicates a main characteristic of this rising into Brahma, by which we have a beautiful characterization of Krishna himself. At that time the constitution of the soul was all passive. The world of pictures came to you, you gave yourself up to these flowing pictures. Compare this with the altogether different nature of *our* everyday world. Devotion, giving ourselves up to things, does not help us to understand them, even though there are many who do not wish to advance to what must necessarily take place in our time. Nevertheless, for our age we have to exert ourselves, to be alive and active, in order to get ideas and concepts of our surrounding world. Herein lies all the trouble in our education. We have to educate children so that their minds are awake when their concepts of the surrounding world are being formed. Today the soul must be more active than it was in the age before the origin of the *Bhagavad Gita*. We can put it so:

Bhagavad Gita Age — rising to Brahma with passive souls.

Intellectual Age (our present age) — actively working our way up into the higher worlds.

What then must Krishna say when he wishes to introduce that new age in which the active way of gaining an understanding of the universe is gradually to begin? He must say, "I have to come; I have to give thee the ego-man, a gift that shall impel thee to activity." If it had all remained passive as before — a being interwoven with the world, devoted to the world — the new age would never have begun. Everything connected with the entry of the soul into the spiritual world before the time of the *Gita*, Krishna calls *devotion*. "All is devotion to Brahma." This he compares to the feminine in man; while what is the self in man, the active working element that is to create self-consciousness, that pushes up from within as the generator of the self-consciousness that is to come, Krishna calls the masculine in man. What man can attain in Brahma must be fertilized by Krishna. So his teaching to Arjuna is, "All men until now were Brahma-

men. Brahma is all that is spread out as the mother-womb of the whole world. But I am the father, who came into the world to fertilize the maternal womb."

Thus the consciousness of self is created, which is to work on all men. This is indicated as clearly as possible. Krishna and Brahma are related to each other as father and mother in the world. Together they produce the self-consciousness man must have in the further course of his evolution — the self-consciousness that makes it possible for him to become ever more perfect as an individual being. The Krishna faith has altogether to do with the single man, the individual person. To follow his teaching exclusively means to strive for the perfection of oneself as an individual. This can be achieved only by liberating the self; loosening it from all that adheres to external conditions. Fix your attention on this backbone of Krishna's teaching, how it directs man to put aside all externals, to become free from the life that takes its course in continually changing conditions of every kind; to comprehend oneself in the self alone, that it may be borne ever onward to higher perfection. See how this perfection depends on man's leaving behind him all the external configuration of things, casting off the whole of outer life like a shell, becoming free and ever more inwardly alive in himself. Man tearing himself away from his environment, no longer asking what goes on in external processes of perfection but asking how shall he perfect *himself*. This is the teaching of Krishna.

Krishna — that is, the spirit who worked through Krishna — appeared again in the Jesus child of the Nathan line of the House of David, described in St. Luke's Gospel. Thus, fundamentally, this child embodied the impulse, all the forces that tend to make man independent and loosen him from external reality. What was the intention of this soul that did not enter human evolution but worked in Krishna and again in this Jesus child? At a far distant time this soul had had to go through the experience of remaining outside human evolution because the antagonist Lucifer had come; he who said, "Your eyes will be opened and you will distinguish good and evil, and be as God." In the ancient Indian sense Lucifer said to man, "You will be as the Gods, and will have power to find the sattwa, rajas and tamas conditions in the world."

Lucifer directed man's attention to the outer world. By his instigation man had to learn to know the external, and therefore had to go through the long course of evolution down to the time of Christ. Then he came who was once withdrawn from Lucifer; came in Krishna and later in the Luke Jesus child. In two stages he gave that teaching that from another side

was to be the antithesis of the teaching of Lucifer in Paradise. "He wanted to open your eyes to the conditions of sattwa, rajas, and tamas. Shut your eyes to these conditions and you will find yourselves as men, as self-conscious human beings." Thus does the Imagination appear before us. On the one side the Imagination of Paradise, where Lucifer opens man's eyes to the three conditions in the external world, when for a while the Opponent of Lucifer withdraws. Then men go through their evolution and reach the point where in two stages another teaching is given them, of self-consciousness, which bids them close their eyes to the three external conditions. Both teachings are one-sided. If the Krishna-Jesus influence alone had continued, one one-sidedness would have been added to another. Man would have taken leave of all that surrounds him, would have lost all interest in external evolution. Each person would only have sought his own perfection. Striving for perfection is right; but such striving bought at the price of a lack of interest in the whole of humanity is one-sided, even as the Luciferic influence was one-sided. Hence the all-embracing Christ Impulse entered the higher synthesis of the two one-sided tendencies.

In the personality of the St. Luke Jesus child Himself the Christ Impulse lived for three years; the Christ who came to mankind to bring together these two extremes. Through each of them mankind would have fallen into weakness and sin. Through Lucifer humanity would have been condemned to live one-sidedly in the external conditions of sattwa, rajas and tamas. Through Krishna they were to be educated for the other extreme, to close their eyes and seek only their own perfection. Christ took the sin upon Himself. He gave to men what reconciles the two one-sided tendencies. He took upon Himself the sin of self-consciousness that would close its eyes to the world outside. He took upon Himself the sin of Krishna, and of all who would commit his sin, and He took upon Himself the sin of Lucifer and of all who would commit the sin of fixing their attention on externalities. By taking both extremes upon Himself he makes it possible for humanity by degrees to find a harmony between the inner and the outer world because in that harmony alone man's salvation is to be found.

An evolution that has once begun, however, cannot end suddenly. The urge to self-consciousness that began with Krishna went on and on, increasing and intensifying self-consciousness more and more, bringing about estrangement from the outer world. In our time too this course is tending to continue. At the time when the Krishna impulse was received by the Luke Jesus child mankind was in the midst of this development, this increase of self-consciousness and estrangement from the outer world. It

was this that was brought home to the men who received the baptism of John in the Jordan, so that they understood the Baptist when he said to them, "Change your disposition; walk no longer in the path of Krishna" — though he did not use this word. The path on which mankind had then entered we may call the Jesus-path if we would speak in an occult sense. In effect, the pursuit of this Jesus-path alone went on and on through the following centuries. In many respects human civilization in the centuries following the foundation of Christianity was only related to Jesus, not to the Christ Who lived in Jesus for the three years from the baptism by John until the Mystery of Golgotha.

Every line of evolution, however, works its way onward up to a certain tension. In the course of time this longing for individual perfection was driven to such a pitch that men were in a certain sense brought more and more into the tragedy of estrangement from the divine in nature, from the outer world. Today we are experiencing this in many ways. Many people are going about among us who have little understanding left of our environment. Therefore, it is just in our time that an understanding of the Christ Impulse must break in upon us. The Christ-path must be added to the Jesus-path. The path of one-sided striving for perfection has become too strong. It has gone so far that in many respects men are so remote from their surroundings that certain movements, when they arise, over-reach themselves immediately, and the longing for the opposite is awakened. Many human souls now feel how little they can escape from this enhanced self-consciousness, and this creates an impulse to know the divinity of the outer world. It is such souls as these who in our time will seek the understanding of the Christ Impulse that is opened up by true anthroposophy; the force that does not merely strive for the one-sided perfection of the individual soul but belongs to the whole progress of humanity. To understand the Christ means not merely to strive toward perfection, but to receive in oneself something expressed by St. Paul, "Not I, but Christ in me." "I" is the Krishna word. "Not I, but Christ in me," is the Christian word.

So we see how every spiritual movement in history has in a certain sphere its justification. No one must imagine that the Krishna impulse could have been dispensed with. No one should ever think either that one human spiritual movement is fully justified in its one-sidedness. The two extremes — the Luciferic and the Krishna impulses — had to find their higher unity in the mission of the Christ.

He who would understand in the true anthroposophic sense the impulse necessary for the further evolution of mankind, must realize how anthroposophy has to become a means of shedding light on all religions. He must learn to see how the different streams in evolution all flow into the one main current of development. It would be a dilettante way of beginning to do this if one tried to find again in the Krishna stream what can be found in the stream of Christianity. Only when we regard the matter in this way do we understand what it means to seek a unity in all religions. There is, however, another way of doing so. One may repeat over and over, "In all religions the same fundamental essence is contained." In effect, the same essence is contained in the root of a plant, in the stem, leaves, flowers, the pollen, and the fruit. That is true, but it is an abstract truth. It is no more profound than if one were to say, "Why make any distinctions? Salt, pepper, vinegar, and milk all have their place on the table; all are one, for all are substance." Here you can tell how futile such a way of thought can be, but you do not notice it so easily when it comes to comparing religions. It will not do to compare the Chinese, Brahmin, Krishnan, Buddhist, Persian, Moslem, and Christian faiths in this abstract way, saying, "Look, everywhere we find the same principles. In each case there is a Savior."

Abstractions can indeed be found in countless places and in countless ways, but this is a dilettante method because it leads to nothing. One may form societies to pursue the study of all religions, and do so in the same sense as saying pepper, salt, etc. are one because they are all substance. That has no importance. What is important is to regard things as they really are. To the way of looking at things that goes so far in occult dilettantism as to keep on declaiming the equality of all religions, it is one and the same whether what lived in the Christ is the pivot of the whole of evolution or whether it can be found in the first man you meet in the street. For one who wishes to guide his life by truth it is an atrocity to associate the impulse in the world's history that is bound up with the Mystery of Golgotha and for which the name Christ has been preserved — to associate that impulse with any other impulse in history, because in truth it is the central point of the whole of earthly evolution.

In these lectures I have tried by means of a particular instance to indicate how present-day occultism must try to throw light on the different spiritual movements that have appeared in the course of human history. Though each has its right and proper point of contact, one must distinguish between them as between the stem of a plant and the green leaf, and the green leaf from the

colored petal, though all together form a unity. If one tries with this truly modern occultism to penetrate with one's soul into what has flowed into humanity in diverse currents, one recognizes how the different religious faiths lose nothing of their greatness and majesty. How sublime was the greatness that appeared to us in the figure of Krishna even when we simply tried to get a definite view of his place in evolution. All such lines of thought as we can give only in outline are indeed imperfect enough, and you may be assured that no one is more aware of their imperfection than the present speaker. But the endeavor has been to show in what spirit a true consideration of the spiritual movement toward individuality in mankind must be carried out. I purposely tried to derive our thoughts from a spiritual creation remote from us, the *Bhagavad Gita*, to show how Western minds can perceive and feel what they owe to Krishna; what he, through the continued working of his impulse, still signifies for their own upward striving.

However, the spiritual movement we here represent necessarily demands that we enter concretely, and with real love, into the special nature of every current in man's spiritual history. This is a bit inconvenient because it brings us all too near to the humble thought of how little after all we really penetrate into their depths. Another idea follows upon this, that we must go on striving further and ever further. Both of these ideas are inconvenient. It is the sad fate of that movement we call anthroposophy, that it produces inconvenient results for many souls. It requires that we actively lay hold of the definite, separate facts of the world's development. At the same time it requires each of us to say earnestly to himself, "I can indeed reach something higher, and I will. Always it is only a certain stage and standpoint that I have attained. I must forever go on striving — on — and on — without end."

Thus, all along it has been not quite comfortable to belong to that spiritual movement that by our efforts is endeavoring to take its place in what is called the Theosophical Movement. [Dr. Steiner is referring here, and in the following passages, to his break with the Theosophical Society and to the formation of the Anthroposophical Society. A full account of these events can be found in G. Wachsmuth, *The Life and Work of Rudolf Steiner*, pp. 186–189, available from the Anthroposophic Press, Inc.] It has not been easy, because we

demand that people shall learn to strive ever more deeply to penetrate the sacred mysteries. We could not supply you with anything so easy as introducing some person's son or even daughter, saying, "You need only wait, the Savior of mankind will appear physically embodied in this boy or girl." We could not do this because we must be true. Yet, one who perceives what is happening cannot but regard these latest proceedings as the final grotesque outcome of the dilettante comparison of religions that can also be put forward so easily, and that continually repeats what should be taken as a matter of course, the tritest of all sayings, "All religions contain the same essence."

The last weeks and months have shown — and my speaking here on this significant subject has shown it again — that a circle of people can be found at the present time who are ready to seek spiritual truths. We have no other concern than to put these truths forward, though many, or even everyone, may leave us. If so, it will make no difference in the way the spiritual truths are here proclaimed. The sacred obligation to truth will guide that movement that underlies this cycle of lectures. Whoever would go with us must do so under the conditions that have now become necessary. It is certainly more convenient to proceed otherwise, not entering into another side of the matter as we do by pointing out the reality in all things. But that also is part of our obligation to truth. It is simpler to inform people of the equality and unity of religions, or tell them they are to wait for the incarnation of a Savior who is predestined, whom they are to recognize not by themselves but on someone's authority.

Human souls today will themselves have to decide how far a spiritual movement can be carried on and upheld by pure devotion to the ideal of truthfulness. In our time it had to come to that sharp cleavage, whose climax was reached when those who had no other desire than to set forth what is true and genuine in evolution, were described as Jesuits. This was a convenient way of separating, but the external evidence was the work of objective falsehood. This cycle of lectures may once more have shown you that we have been working out of no one-sided tendency, since it comprises the present, the past, and the primal past, in order to reveal the unique, fundamental impulse of human evolution. So I too may say that it fills me with the deepest satisfaction to have been able to give these lectures here

before you. This shows me there is hope because there are souls here who have the impulse, the urge toward that which works also in the super-sensible with nothing but simple, honest truthfulness.

I was forced to add this final word to these lectures, for it is necessary in view of all that has happened to us in the course of time down to the point of being excluded from the Theosophical Society. Considering all we have suffered, and all that is now being falsely asserted in numerous pamphlets, it was necessary to say something, although a discussion of these matters is always painful to me.

Those who desire to work with us must know that we have taken for our banner the humble, yet unconditional, honest, striving for truth; striving ever upward into the higher worlds.

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