

Spiritual Science



Deep Dive Article

On Karma

An Overview of one of the keys to understanding life

Source: Various lectures

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The following material has been transcribed from various sources, all based on the work of Dr. Rudolf Steiner. I have taken the liberty of updating the use of the term "Theosophy" (some of this lecture material was given prior to RS's leaving the Anthroposophical Society) to Spiritual Science (an alternate term used by RS for his own Anthroposophy) and have made various minor grammatical corrections in the text. I have also added my own notes here and there, denoted by '-a'.

1

Workings of the Law of Karma in Human Life

What we did in a former life determines our external destiny

Source: [Chapter 7](#) of the book [At the Gates of Spiritual Science](#), 1906.

28 August 1906, Stuttgart

Today I want to speak about the workings of the law of karma through individual human lives. Any such explanation is bound to be incomplete, for I shall not be putting before you any speculations or theories. I shall limit myself, as occultism always should, to facts and experiences. I shall therefore tell you of a karmic influence of one kind or another only when I have observed a person in that particular situation. In speaking of karmic relationships I shall draw only on real experiences.

We touched yesterday on the fact that for most people the really burning question is: How does our destiny come about and why are we born with talents and circumstances that vary so widely? In order to understand these karmic relationships, we shall have to look back again at what has been said about man's four bodies — the physical, the etheric, the astral, and within them the Ego-body (the " I " as RS later refers to it -a), in which the higher part of the human being is enclosed. In considering karmic relationships we shall be concerned chiefly with how causes and effects are connected with these different bodies.

Let us consider first the physical body, in so far as it bears on the law of karma. All our actions take place in the physical world; if we are to cause anyone pleasure or pain we have to be — of course not literally — in the same place as he is. What we do results from the movements of our physical body and on everything connected with it. Our external destiny in a later life depends upon what we do in this physical life. This external destiny is, as it were, the environment into which we are born. Anyone who

has done bad deeds prepares for himself a bad environment, and vice versa. That is the first important karmic law: What we did in a former life determines our external destiny.

There is a second fundamental law. If we look at the way a man develops, we see that in the course of his life he learns an extraordinary amount. He absorbs concepts, ideas, experiences, feelings, and all this produces great changes in him. Think of yourselves as you were a few years ago before you knew anything about Spiritual Science; think of the new ideas you have acquired and how they have changed your life. All this has produced a corresponding change in the astral body, for it is the most subtle and delicate and responds most quickly to change.

Temperament, character and inclinations change much more slowly. A passionate child, for example, changes very slowly. Temperament, character and inclinations often persist all through life. Ideas and experiences change quickly; it is just the opposite with temperament, character and inclinations. These attributes are very tenacious; they do change, but slowly. Their relation to quickly changing ideas is somewhat like the relation of the hour-hand of a clock to the quick-moving minute-hand. This is because they depend on the etheric body, which consists of substance much less open to change than is the substance of the astral body. Slowest of all to change is the physical body. It is laid down once for all, so to speak, and retains more or less the same character throughout life. We shall see later how the Initiate can work upon his etheric body and can change even his physical body. For the moment we must consider how all this extends beyond a single life.

The ideas, feelings and so on which transform the astral body during a long life will produce a marked change in the etheric body only in the next life. Thus if someone wants to be born in his next life with good habits and inclinations, he must try to prepare these as much as possible in his astral body. If he makes the effort to do good, he will be born in his next life with the tendency to do good and that will be a characteristic of his etheric body. If he wants to be born with a good memory, he must exercise his memory as much as he can; he must practise looking back over the separate years of his life and over his life as a whole. In this way he will engender in his astral body something which will become a characteristic of his etheric body in his next life — the foundation for a good memory. A man who simply hurries through the world will find in his next life that he

cannot stick at anything. But if anyone lives in intimate sympathy with a particular environment, he will be born with a special predilection for everything that reminds him of it.

We can trace the various temperaments, also, back to a previous life, for they are qualities of the etheric body.

The choleric man has a strong will, is bold, courageous, with an urge to action. Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Caesar, Napoleon, for example, were choleric. This type of character shows itself even in childhood, and a child with this temperament will take the lead in childhood games.

The melancholic man is very much occupied with himself and hence is apt to keep himself to himself. He does a lot of thinking, particularly about the way in which his environment affects him. He withdraws into himself, tends to be suspicious. This temperament, too, is apparent in childhood. A child of this type does not like to display his toys; he is afraid something will be taken away from him and would like to keep everything under lock and key.

The phlegmatic man has no real interest in anything; he is dreamy, inactive, lazy, and seeks sensuous enjoyment.

The sanguine man, on the other hand, gets easily interested in anything but he does not stick to it; his interest quickly fades; he is continually changing his hobbies.

These are the four basic types. Generally a man is a mixture of all four, but we can usually discover the fundamental one. These four temperaments express themselves in the etheric body, and so there are four main types of etheric body. They have differing currents and movements, and these impart a particular basic colour to the astral body. This does not depend on the astral body; it only reveals itself there.

The melancholic temperament is karmically determined if a man in his previous life was compelled to lead a narrow, restricted existence and to be much alone; if he was always preoccupied only with himself and unable to make much interest in anything else. If, however, a man has learnt a great deal from experience but has also had something of a hard struggle, if he has encountered many things and has not merely looked on at them, he will become a choleric. If, again, he has had a pleasant life without much

struggle or toil, or if he saw and passed by many things, but only as an onlooker, all this will work karmically into the etheric body of his next life: he will become a phlegmatic or a sanguine type.

From this we can see how we can work for our next life. In occult schools this is done with conscious intention. In former times it was done more often than it is today because of the changes in human evolution. Five thousand years ago the occult teacher had a quite different task. He had to concern himself with people in groups; human beings had not reached the stage where each man has to take responsibility for himself. The deliberate purpose was to enable whole classes and groups of people to work together harmoniously in their next lives. But human beings are becoming more and more individual and independent; the occult teacher can no longer use anyone as a means to an end but has to treat everyone as an end in himself, and to help him to develop as far as is possible for him. In the oldest civilisations, in India for example, the entire population was divided into four castes, and the training given was intended to fit everyone for a particular caste in the next life. The development of human beings, together with the picture of the world they were to have, was deliberately planned for thousands of years ahead, and it was this that gave occult leaders their great power.

How, then, should we try to influence our etheric body for the next life? Everything done to develop the etheric body produces a result, however slowly, and education can take pains to instil quite specific habits. Whatever the etheric body acquires during one life comes to expression in the physical body in the next life. All the habits and inclinations of the present etheric body will create a predisposition to good or bad health. Good habits will produce good health; bad ones will create a tendency to some specific illness in the next life. A strong determination to rid oneself of a bad habit will work down into the physical body and produce a tendency to good health. How a disposition to infectious diseases arises in the physical body has been particularly well observed. Whether we actually get a disease will depend on what we do; but whether we are specially liable to contract it is the result of the inclinations we had in a previous life. Infectious diseases, strangely enough, can be traced back to a highly developed selfish acquisitiveness in a previous life.

If we want really to understand health and illness, we must bear in mind how complicated the circumstances are. Illness need not be a matter of individual karma only; the karma of a whole people has to be taken into account.

An interesting example of how things in the spiritual life are inter-related can be seen in the migration of the Huns and Mongols who poured from Asia into the West. The Mongols were stragglers of the Atlanteans. While the Indians, the German and other peoples were progressing, the Mongols had remained behind. Just as the animals have separated off from the evolutionary path of mankind, so have certain lower peoples and races fallen behind. The Mongols were Atlanteans whose physical development had taken a downward course. In the astral bodies of such decadent people an abundance of decaying astral substance can be seen. When the Mongols fell upon the Germans and other Central European peoples, they created a wave of fear and panic. These emotions belong to the astral body, and under such conditions decaying astral substances will flourish. Thus the astral bodies of Europeans became infected and in later generations the infection came out in the physical body, affecting not merely individuals but whole groups of peoples. It emerged as leprosy, that terrible disease which wrought such devastation in the Middle Ages. It was the physical consequence of an influence on the astral body.

Philology (historical and comparative linguistics, the study of literature -a) will not help you in finding evidence for this, because it knows nothing of astral influences. But you will at least find some evidence for the descent of the Mongols from the Atlanteans in the names: thus Attila, the leader of the Huns, is called in the Nordic language, Atli — meaning someone descended from the Atlanteans.

This then is how diseases affecting whole peoples have originated, and in ancient times some knowledge of it survived. The Bible has a true saying, very often misunderstood, when it speaks of God visiting the sins of the fathers on the children, even to the third and fourth generations. This does not refer to the successive incarnations of individuals, but to a karma affecting whole generations. We have to take the saying literally, as indeed many such statements have to be taken more literally than is usually thought.

The fact is that we must first learn to read the religious sources properly. In ancient times simple-minded people took them literally. As people became more sophisticated, this way of reading became increasingly rare. Then the clever liberal theologians began to expound the sources, each in his own way; and this meant that many passages were not expounded but undermined. Then there was a third stage: That of the people who took everything — old myths and legends and even the life of Christ — as a series of symbols. All this depends on the ingenuity of individuals; some

will always be cleverer at it than others. But there is also a fourth stage: That of the occultist, who can once more understand everything literally because through his spiritual knowledge he can see how things are interconnected.

From what has been said you will realise that habits and feelings, which first belong to the spiritual life, can later express themselves in physical life. There is an important principle here: If care is taken to inculcate good habits, not only will the moral life of subsequent generations be improved, but also the health of a whole people, and vice versa. This is then their collective karma.

There is a form of illness, very widespread today, which was hardly known a hundred years ago — nerves or neuroticism — not because it was unrecognised, but because it was so uncommon. This characteristic illness springs from the materialistic outlook of the eighteenth century. Without that, the illness would never have appeared. The occult teacher knows that if this materialism were to continue for a few decades more, it would have a devastating effect on the general health of mankind. If these materialistic habits of thought were to remain unchecked, people would not only be neurotic in the ordinary sense but children would be born trembling; they would not merely be sensitive to their environment but would receive from everything around them a sensation of pain. Above all, mental ailments would spread very rapidly; epidemics of insanity would occur during the following decade. This was the danger — epidemic insanity — that faced mankind, and the possibility of it in the future was why the leaders of humanity, the Masters of Wisdom, saw the necessity of allowing some spiritual wisdom to be diffused among mankind at large. Nothing short of a spiritual picture of the world could restore to coming generations a tendency to good health. Spiritual Science, you will realise, is thus a profound movement which has been given out to meet the needs of humanity. A hundred years ago a "nervous" man meant one with iron nerves. Simply from the change in the meaning of the word you can see that something quite new has come into the world.

How is the law of karma related to physical heredity? Physical heredity plays a great role; we know that some of the characteristics of a father and his ancestors may be found again in the son. In the Bach family (Among the children of Johann Sebastian Bach, 1685–1750, were three sons, all well-known musicians: Friedemann Bach, 1710–1784; Philip Emanuel Bach, 1714–1788; Johann Christian Bach, 1735–1782.), for instance, there were twenty-eight highly gifted musicians in a period of 250 years. Again,

Bernoulli (a family of mathematicians, Basle. Jacob Bernoulli, 1654–1705; Nicholas Bernoulli, 1687–1759; Daniel Bernoulli, 1700–1782.) was a great mathematician, and eight other gifted mathematicians came after him in his family. This is all a matter of heredity, we are told; but that is only partially true. In order to be a good musician you need more than a musical predisposition in your soul; you need also a good ear in the physical sense. This good ear is a physical quality to be found in a family of musicians, and is passed on from one generation to the next. In a family, then, where a great deal of music is performed, you will find good musical ears, and so when a soul with a strongly developed musical talent is to be incarnated, it will naturally not choose a family with no interest in music — where it would languish — but one which has suitable physical organs. This fits in very well with the law of karma.

The same thing applies to moral courage. If a soul with that predisposition cannot find a suitable heredity, the characteristic will fade out. You can see that you have to be very careful in your choice of parents! The fact is not that the child resembles his parents, but that he is born into a family where the parents most resemble him.

You might ask: Does not this devalue a mother's love? Not at all. Just because the deepest sympathy already exists before birth, a particular child seeks out a particular mother; the love between them has its source much further back, and after birth it continues. The child loved its mother before it was born: no wonder then that the mother returns the love. Thus the significance of a mother's love is not falsely explained away; rather is its true source made clear. Of this, more tomorrow.

2

Good and Evil. Individual Karmic Questions

Conscience has developed fairly late in human evolution

Source: [Chapter 8](#) of the book [At the Gates of Spiritual Science](#), 1906.

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We will continue our study of particular karmic questions in relation to human life. What does occult science have to say about the origin of *conscience*? At our present stage of evolution conscience appears as a kind of inner voice telling us what to do and what to leave undone. How did such an inner voice come into being?

It is interesting to inquire whether in the historical evolution of mankind there has always been something comparable to what we call conscience. We find that in the earliest times, language had no word for it. In Greek literature it appears quite late, and in the language of the earlier Greeks no word for it exists. The same thing is true of the early periods of other civilisations. We may conclude, then, that the idea of conscience, in a more or less conscious form, came only gradually to be recognised. Conscience has developed fairly late in human evolution, and we shall see presently what our ancestors possessed in place of it.

How, then, has conscience gradually developed? On one of his journeys Darwin (*Charles Darwin*, 1809–1882) came across a cannibal and tried to convince him that it is not a good thing to eat another human being. The cannibal retorted that in order to decide whether eating a man is good or bad you must first eat one yourself. In other words, the cannibal had not reached the point of judging between good and bad in terms of moral ideas, but in accordance simply with the pleasure he experienced. He was in fact a survival from an earlier stage of civilisation which was at one time universal. But how does a man like this cannibal come to distinguish between good and bad? He went on eating his fellow-men until one day he

was due to be eaten himself. At that moment he experienced the fact that it could really happen to him. He felt that there was something wrong about this, and the fruits of this experience remained with him in Kamaloka and Devachan. Into his next incarnation he brought a dim feeling that what he had been doing was not quite right. This feeling became more and more definite in the course of further incarnations; he also came to take heed of the feelings of others, and thus he gradually developed a certain restraint. After various further incarnations the feeling became still more definite and gradually the thought emerged: Here is something one should not do. Similarly, a savage at a primitive stage would eat everything indiscriminately, but when he got [a] stomach-ache he came to realise by degrees that there were some things he could eat and some he could not. This kind of experience became gradually more and more firmly rooted, and finally it developed into the voice of conscience.

Conscience is therefore the outcome of experiences spread over a number of incarnations. Fundamentally, all knowledge, from the highest to the lowest, is the outcome of what a man has experienced; it has come into being as a result of trial and error.

An interesting fact is relevant here. Only since Aristotle has there been a science of logic, of logical thought. From this we must conclude that accurate thinking too, was born at a certain time. This is indeed so: thinking itself had first to evolve, and logical thinking arose in the course of time from fundamental observation of how thinking can go wrong. Knowledge is something mankind has acquired through many incarnations. Only after long trial and error could a store of knowledge be built up. All this illustrates the importance of the law of karma; here we have another example of something which has developed out of experience into a permanent habit and inclination. A motive such as conscience binds itself to the etheric body, becoming in time a permanent characteristic of it because the astral body has been so often convinced that this or that would not do.

Another interesting karmic relationship is between an habitually selfish attitude and a loving sympathy with others. Some people are hardened egoists — not only in their acquisitiveness — and others are unselfish and sympathetic. Both attitudes depend on the etheric body and may even find expression in the physical body. People who in one life have been habitually selfish will age quickly in their next life; they seem to shrivel up. On the other hand, if in one life you have been ready to make sacrifices and have

loved others, you will remain young and hale (free from defect, disease, or infirmity; retaining exceptional health and vigor). In this way you can prepare even the physical body for the next life.

If you recall what I said yesterday, you will have in mind a question: How is it with the achievements of the physical body itself? Its deeds become its future destiny; but what is the effect of any illnesses it may have had in this life?

The answer to this question, however strange it may sound, is not mere theory or speculation, but is based on occult experience, and from it you can learn the mission of illness. Fabre d'Olivet, (Antoine Fabre d'Olivet, 1768–1825, author of *La Langue hebraique restituee*, 1816) who has investigated the origins of the Book of Genesis, once used a beautiful simile, comparing destiny with a natural process. The valuable pearl, he says, derives from an illness: it is a secretion of the oyster, so that in this case life has to fall sick in order to produce something precious. In the same way, physical illnesses in one life reappear in the next life as physical beauty. Either the physical body becomes more beautiful as a result of the illness it endured; or it may be that an illness a man has caught from infection in his environment is compensated by the beauty of his new environment. Beauty thus develops, karmically, out of pain, suffering, privation and illness. This may seem a startling connection, but it is a fact. Even the appreciation of beauty develops in this way: there can be no beauty in the world without pain and suffering and illness. The same general law holds for the history of man's evolution. You will see from this how wonderful karmic relationships really are, and how questions about evil, illness and pain cannot be answered without knowledge of the important inner relationships within the evolution of humanity.

The line of evolution goes back into ancient, very ancient times, when conditions on Earth, and the Earth itself, were quite different. There was a time when none of the higher animals existed; when there were no fishes, amphibians, birds or mammals, but only animals less developed than the fishes. Yet man, though in a quite different form, was already there. His physical body was still very imperfect; his spiritual body was more highly developed. He was still enclosed within a soft etheric body, and his soul worked on his physical body from outside. Man still contained all other beings within himself. Later on he worked his way upwards and left behind the fish form which had been part of himself. These fish forms were huge, fantastic-looking creatures, unlike the fishes of today. Then again man evolved to a higher stage and cast out the birds from himself. Then the

reptiles and amphibia made their way out of man — grotesque creatures such as the saurians and water-tortoises, which were really stragglers from an earlier group of beings, even further removed from man, whose evolution had lagged behind. Then man cast out the mammals from himself, and finally the apes; and then he himself continued to advance.

Man has therefore always been man and not an ape; he separated off the whole animal kingdom from himself so that he might become more truly human. It was as though you gradually strained all the dye-stuffs out of a coloured liquid and left only clear water behind. In older days there were natural philosophers, such as Paracelsus and Oken, (Lorenz Oken, 1779–1851, natural scientist and philosopher) who put this very well. When a man looks at the animal world, they said, he should tell himself: "I carried all that within myself and cast it out from my own being."

Thus man once had within himself a great deal that was later externalised. And today he still has within him something that later on will be outside — his karma, both the good and the evil. Just as he has separated the animals from himself, so will he thrust good and evil out into the world. The good will result in a race of men who are naturally good; the evil in a separate evil race. You will find this stated in the Apocalypse, but it must not be misunderstood. We must distinguish between the development of the soul and that of races. A soul may be incarnated in a race on the down grade, but if it does not itself commit evil, it need not incarnate a second time in such a race; it may incarnate in one that is ascending. There are quite enough souls streaming in from other directions to incarnate in these declining races.

But what is inward has to become outward, and man will rise still higher when his karma has worked itself out. With all this something of extraordinary interest is connected. Centuries ago, with the future development of humanity in view, secret Orders which set themselves the highest conceivable tasks were established. One such Order was the Manichean, of which ordinary scholarship gives a quite false picture. The Manicheans are supposed to have taught that a Good and an Evil are part of the natural order and have always been in conflict with one another, this having been determined for them by the Creation. Here there is a glimmer of the Order's real task, but distorted to the point of nonsense. The individual members of the Order were specially trained for their great work. The Order knew that some day there will be men in whose karma there is no longer any evil, but that there will also be a race evil by nature, among whom all kinds of evil will be developed to a higher degree than in the

most savage animals, for they will practise evil consciously, exquisitely, with the aid of highly developed intellects. Even now the Manichean Order is training its members so that they may be able to transform evil in later generations.

The extreme difficulty of the task is that these evil races will not be like bad children in whom there is goodness which can be brought out by precept and example. The members of the Manichean Order are already learning how to transform quite radically those who by nature are wholly evil. And then the transformed evil will become a quite special good. The power to effect this change will bring about a condition of moral holiness on Earth. But this can be achieved only if the evil has first come into existence; then the power needed to overcome the evil will yield a power that can reach the heights of holiness. A field has to be treated with manure and the manure has to ferment in the soil; similarly, humanity needs the manure of evil in order to attain to the highest holiness. And herein lies the mission of evil. A man's muscles get strong by use; and equally, if good is to rise to the heights of holiness, it must first overcome the evil which opposes it. The task of evil is to promote the ascent of man. Things such as this give us a glimpse into the secret of life. Later on, when man has overcome evil, he can go on to redeem the creatures he has thrust down, and at whose cost he has ascended. That is the purpose of evolution.

The following point is rather more difficult. The shell of a snail or mussel is secreted out of the living substance of the animal. The shell which surrounds the snail was originally inside its body its house is in fact its body in a more solid form. Spiritual Science tells us that we are one with all that surrounds us. This means that man at one time contained everything within himself. The Earth's crust, in fact, had its origin in man, who in the far past crystallised it out from within himself. Just as the snail at one time had its house within itself, so man had all other beings and kingdoms, minerals, plants and animals, within himself, and can say to them all: The substances were within me; I have crystallised out their constituent parts. Thus when man looks at anything outside himself, it becomes intelligible for him to say: All that is myself.

Even more subtle is a further idea. Imagine that ancient condition of humanity when nothing had yet been separated off from man. Man was there, and he formed mental pictures but they were not objective — not, that is, caused by external objects making an impression on him — they were purely subjective. Everything had its origin in man. Our dreams are

still a legacy from the time when man, as it were, spun the whole world out of himself. Then he was able to look on the world over against himself. We as human beings have made everything, and in the rest of creation we can see our own products, our own being which has taken solid form.

Kant (Immanuel Kant, 1724–1804.) speaks of the thing-in-itself as something unknowable by man. But in fact there are no limits to knowledge, for man can find, in everything he sees around him, the traces of his own being, left behind.

All this has been said in order to show you that nothing can be truly understood if it is looked at from one side only. Everything which appears to us in one condition was quite different in earlier times; only by relating the present to the past can it be understood. Similarly, if you do not look beyond the physical world of the senses, you will never understand illness, or the mission of evil. In all such relationships there is a deep meaning. Evolution had to take its course in this way, through a process of splitting off, because man was to become an inward being; he had to put all this out of himself in order that he might be able to see his own self. So we can come to understand the mission of illness, of evil, and even of the external world. We are led to these great interconnections by studying the law of karma.

We will now deal with several particular questions about karma which are often asked. What is the karmic reason that causes many people to die young, even in childhood? From individual instances known to occult science we may come to the following conclusion. If we study a child who has died young, we may find that in his previous life he had good abilities and made good use of them. He was a thoroughly competent member of society, but he was rather shortsighted. Because with his weak eyes he could not see clearly, all his experiences acquired a particular colouring. He was wanting in a small matter which could have been better, and because of his weak eyes he always lagged behind. He could have achieved something quite remarkable if he had had good sight. He died, and after a short interval he was incarnated with healthy eyes, but he lived only a few weeks. By this means the members of his being learnt how to acquire good eyes, and he had gained a small portion of life as a corrective of what had been lacking in his previous life. The grief of his parents will, of course, be compensated for karmically, but in this instance they had to serve as instruments for putting the matter right.

What is the karmic explanation of children born dead? In such cases the astral body may well have already united itself with the physical body, and the two lower members may be properly constituted. But the astral body withdraws, and so the child is born dead. But why does the astral body withdraw? The explanation lies in the fact that certain members of man's higher nature are related to certain physical organs. For instance, no being can have an etheric body unless it possesses cells. A stone has no cells or vessels, and so it cannot have an etheric body. Equally, an astral body needs a nervous system: a plant has no nervous system and therefore cannot have an astral body. In fact, if a plant were to be permeated by an astral body it would no longer be a plant, but would have to be provided with cells if it were to be permeated by an etheric body.

Now if the Ego-body (the " I ") is gradually to find a place for itself, there must be warm blood in the physical body. (All red-blooded animals were separated off from man at the time when the Ego-condition was being prepared for man.) Hence it will be seen that the physical organs must be in proper condition if the higher bodies are to dwell within them. It is important to remember that the form of the physical body is moulded by purely physical inheritance. It may also happen that the way in which the various bodily fluids are combined is at fault, although parents are well-matched in soul and spirit. Then the incarnating entity comes to a physical body which cannot house the higher members of its being. Thus for example the physical and etheric bodies may be properly united; then the astral body ought to take possession of the physical body, but the organism at its disposal is not in a suitable condition, and so it has to withdraw. The physical body remains, and is then still-born. A still-birth may thus be the outcome of a faulty mixture, on the physical level, of the fluids of the body, and this, too, will have a karmic connection. The physical body can thrive only in so far as the higher principles can live within it.

How are karmic compensations accomplished? If someone has done something to another person, there will have to be a karmic adjustment between them, which means that the persons concerned must be born again as contemporaries. How does this happen? What are the forces that bring the two persons together?

The way it works out is as follows. A wrong has been done; the victim has suffered it; the person who did it passes into Kamaloka, but first he has to witness the occurrence in the retrospective tableau of his past life. The injury he has inflicted does not then cause him pain, but in Kamaloka, as he relives his life backwards, the event comes before him, and now he

has to suffer the pain he caused. He has to feel it in and through the very self of his victim. This experience imprints itself like a seal on his astral body. He takes with him a portion of the pain, and a definite force remains in him as the outcome of what he has experienced in the other man's being. In this way any pain or pleasure he has to live through turns into a force, and he carries a great number of such forces with him into Devachan.

When he returns to a new incarnation, this is the force that draws together all the persons who have had experiences in common. During the Kamaloka period they lived within one another, and they incorporated these forces into themselves. Hence within one physical human being there may be three or even more "Kamaloka men", in order that the situation involving them may be lived out.

An example known to occult science will make this clear. A man was condemned to death by five judges. What was really happening there? In a previous life the man had killed these other five men and karmic forces had brought all six together for a karmic adjustment. This does not produce a never-ending karmic chain; other relationships come in to change the further course of events.

Spiritual forces, you see, are thus secretly at work to bring about the complicated patterns of human living. Further important aspects of the subject will become clear during the next few days, when we go on to study the whole evolution of Earth and Man.

3

Karma and Details of the Law of Karma

We speak of the interrelationship of Reincarnation and Karma

Source: [Karma and Details of the Law of Karma](#) GA 96.

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Translated by D. S. Osmond

We shall speak today about Karma and details of the law of Karma. You know that by Karma is meant the great law of cause and effect in the spiritual life and that this law of Karma comes into consideration in Spiritual Science since it applies to repeated lives on Earth. We speak of the interrelationship of Reincarnation and Karma. Now as you certainly know, the prevailing conception of this law of Karma is somewhat superficial, as if it were simply a matter of reward and punishment extending from one incarnation into the other, so that when the individual experiences something evil or reprehensible in the present life he must say to himself unconditionally: Because of some guilt incurred in my previous life, I have deserved this — or, if I do this or that, the corresponding reward or punishment will be mine in the next life — but the matter is not as simple as that. Whosoever desires to understand this law of Karma must penetrate more deeply into the nature of man and his whole being.

The law of Karma and Reincarnation, of repeated lives on Earth, comes in for the fiercest possible attacks from the opponents of Spiritual Science, attacks often beginning with the hackneyed phrase: One life on Earth is enough for me. I have no wish to endure it more than once — and finishing with the assertion that it is a teaching which leads to inactivity and blind resignation in face of destiny. We shall go closely into this opposition and be able in the case of every objection to refute it when we study the whole course of Karma. For this purpose, we must remind ourselves once again of what Man is in the deeper sense.

We know that man consists, primarily, of the physical body that can be seen by the eyes and touched by the hands, that is investigated and examined by physical science, dissected by anatomy and is familiar in ordinary life. Many materialistic thinkers regard the physical body as being the only evidence of the existence of man. We have then to regard the etheric body, or life-body, as a second member of the human being. It is a body which consists of a substance essentially different from that of the physical body. It is by no means enough to say that the matter, the substance, of which the etheric body consists is essentially finer than the substance of which the physical body is composed. Far rather we have here a completely different 'substantiality'. It is active matter, matter of the nature of force. This etheric matter which has no connection whatever with what is called ether in Physics, has a certain creative quality and is actually the upbuilding, constructive principle. The best mental picture you can make of the etheric body is that its form is approximately the same as that of the physical body, but it is luminous throughout, although not fully transparent — even for clairvoyants. It is also penetrable; if it were alone one could therefore pass through it. At the same time, it is creative; man's physical organs are built of it. Heart, lung, liver and so forth are created out of this etheric body. From the materialistic standpoint it could therefore be said that in a young child the etheric body must be very small. And that is so. We must think of the etheric body more as a force which in certain circumstances may occupy a smaller space than what it actually creates. Thus, we have here to do with creative life, with a creative body which underlies the physical body that can be touched in space. This etheric body is the bearer of a man's habits. Above all it is the bearer of the memory and the temperament, of the permanent qualities of soul in a human being. In speaking of the soul-nature of a human being we do not mean only the temperament and the qualities of character. But in respect of form all this comes to expression in the etheric body.

The third member of man's being is the astral body. It fills and surrounds his body as an aura of light in which the impulses, desires and passions become visible. This has often been described.

A fourth member of man's being is what comes into manifestation in self-consciousness, in the 'I.' The other members are germinal only and are centred in the 'I.'

In connection with karmic evolution it is these members of man's being that are of primary interest to us. Above all we must be mindful of a very important fact of life. When you look back over your life and think of your

childhood, you will be able to say that you have learnt a very great deal. There was a time when you could not write or read and knew nothing about happenings in the world, about history or literature as well as a great deal else. Now you have knowledge of all this, and it has become a possession of your soul. But you also know that a person can learn a great deal and yet no great change takes place in his original character and temperament. There are individuals who in the course of their lives have amassed a tremendous amount of knowledge and have filled their souls with science of every kind, but who must admit to themselves: I once had a violent temper and still have it today — Or again: I was phlegmatic from the beginning and have remained so. Once upon a time I had this or that habit and still have it. Admittedly there are also individuals who have changed a great deal in their own natures and characters. Perhaps indeed there is no individual who has brought about no change whatever in his fundamental disposition. When you look back to your childhood you will certainly have to admit that you have achieved many changes in your character since then. But at the same time, you will realise that realisation of your characteristics and learning how to change them are processes related to each other as the minute hand of a clock and the hour hand. The transformation of character and temperament proceeds slowly, as does the hour hand of a clock and observations of life are comparatively rapid, rather like the minute hand. This is connected with the fact that everything an individual learns can be received quickly into the soul; the astral body is its bearer and it takes effect in the astral body. When you learn something fundamentally new a feeling comes over you at the moment and is forgotten the next day. Or if you experience pain that with time disappears from your consciousness — these are things which can be seen lighting up in the astral body and then disappearing from it. The astral body is the bearer of all this.

Whatever lights up in us temporarily and disappears again has its seat in the astral body. What becomes a man's permanent stock, as it were, in so far as it comes to expression in the life of soul, everything that becomes habit so that it is noticeable in an individual for a long time — perhaps always — in his life, everything that has to do with the temperament, is situated in the etheric body which is denser than the astral body. When an individual succeeds in changing a habit, a characteristic feature of his temperament, when, for example, he rids himself of habitual indolence and becomes alert and attentive, this becomes evident in the etheric body, not only in the astral body. When a person learns a great deal, assimilating it so thoroughly that it gradually becomes an asset of his very soul and an actual constituent of his inner nature — so that he does not only know it

but possesses it in a deeper sense — then he is changing the configuration of his etheric body. When someone accepts a moral principle and is obliged to say to himself repeatedly: the principle exists so that is why I obey it — then the principle is rooted in the astral body only. But if the principle is rooted so firmly in him that he simply can do no other than obey it — then it is established in the etheric body. Transition from the astral body to the etheric body takes place slowly and gradually in the course of life.

We will now pass from a study of these members of man's constitution to their connection with Karma. What takes place during the same life on Earth only slowly, that is to say the transition of something that to begin with is in the astral body into the etheric body manifests karmically from one incarnation to the other in the following way. — Someone who has tried to judge things in accordance with true morality, and who in this striving may perhaps still have been prompted by other considerations, finds the fruits of this striving in his next life as a basic quality of his etheric body, as a kind of habit, as a quality of his character. What is active in the present life in the astral body becomes in the next life an attribute of the etheric body. When you come across a person with a certain praiseworthy habit which is constantly expressed in his life, this, is an indication that in his earlier incarnation he had absorbed the corresponding ideas or closely scrutinised his own nature. Propensities and habits stem from ideas, thoughts and concepts that had been formed in previous lives. If you pay attention to this, you can make provision for the next incarnation by laying the foundation of a definite organisation of the etheric body. You can say to yourself: I shall try in this life to convince myself over and over again that this or that is good and right. Then the etheric body will ultimately show you that it is good and right in the very nature of things to follow the corresponding principles.

A certain concept that can be explained in the light of karma, is particularly important here. It is the concept of conscience. What arises from a man's conscience is equally something that has been acquired. He has a conscience, an instinct for what is good, right and true only because in his past lives, in his experiences during life, in his moral principles, he has moulded this conscience. You can provide for the strengthening and enhancement of conscience if you undertake every day to deepen your moral conceptions. Moral conceptions become conscience in the next life and the one after that.

So you see, that what the minute hand on the clock of life shows us becomes the hour hand in the next life. There must, however, be a certain strengthening of the moral principle and its realisation in one life and then they are consolidated for the next. What is established in the etheric body of one life brings to maturity the attributes of the physical body of the next life. Good habits, good inclinations, good traits of character, prepare healthiness, physical proficiency, physical strength, therefore a healthy physical body, for the next life. A healthy physical body in one life indicates that the individual concerned prepared this physical body for himself in an earlier life through self-acquired habits and qualities of character. A particularly strong connection exists between a well-developed memory in one life and the physical body in the next life.

Let us take as an example a person who forgets everything immediately and another who has a faithful memory. One need only consciously recall experiences into the memory and practise this consistently, and it will finally be noticed that not only has a good memory of things for which one has had specific training been acquired, but that this memory also becomes a quite different faculty which comes into consideration during the process of spiritual development. The capacity to survey the past develops to a very marked degree. An individual who develops his memory conscientiously will be reborn with physical soundness, with limbs that can be truly useful to him for giving effect to what his soul inwardly desires. A body that is incapable of giving effect to what the soul wishes stems from a previous life during which no care was given to the development of a good and healthy memory but when, through slovenliness, forgetfulness prevailed.

Today we are speaking only of single phenomena, but you can realise the magnitude of the domain of which we are speaking. A genuine occultist will never indulge in speculations on this subject. What I have put before you are not theories but definite cases that have been tested. What has been said here is based upon specific results of research. When it was stated that a sound physical organism which obeys the soul can be traced back to a good memory in the previous life, a number of cases had been investigated and the indications given were based upon the facts ascertained by that investigation. Facts alone have been presented.

Now what develops in the etheric body passes in the next life into the physical body. Good inclinations, qualities of character, and proficient habits in life come to expression in a healthy physical body in the next incarnation, whereas the opposite qualities produce a sickly organism in

the next life. This is not to be understood in the sense that a particular disease stems from a particular quality, but certain predispositions for illness can always be led back to quite definite qualities of character and temperament in the previous life. An individual whose life in the past was fraught with tainted qualities of character has, in the present life, an organism that is more easily prone to physical illnesses than the organism of an individual who was equipped with healthy characteristics and a sound temperament. Such an individual will be reborn with a body that can be exposed to every possible form of epidemic without being infected.

You see, therefore, that things in the world are complicated and are subject to the law of cause and effect. To give an example, here is a case based on definite results of investigation. It may at first be something of a shock but in a study group it may certainly be spoken of. A certain individual had developed an entirely egoistic urge for acquisition, a veritable greed for external wealth. It was not a matter of a healthy striving for riches which may spring from an altruistic aim to be of help and engage in selfless activity in the world — that is something different — but it was a case of an egoistic longing for acquisition due to a particular constitution of the etheric body; the striving for acquisition was abnormal. Such an individual may very possibly be born in the next life with a physical body prone to catch infectious diseases. In numerous cases it has been established by occultism that individuals readily prone to infection from epidemics in the present life, were possessed of a pathological sense for acquisitions in the previous life.

Other examples could be specifically quoted. Thus, there are two characteristics which have a clearly recognisable influence upon the karmic formation of the following life. There we must speak to begin with of the strong influence exerted by a loving, benevolent attitude towards one's fellow men. There are individuals who accept everything from their fellowmen with benevolence, who deal with their environment lovingly and sympathetically. In many cases this love extends far beyond pure philanthropy. Such individuals love nature and the whole world. The more strongly this sense of all-embracing love has developed and become habit in the soul and is therefore rooted in the etheric body, the greater becomes the capacity of the individual concerned to retain the qualities of youth for a long time in a subsequent incarnation. Therefore an individual who ages very late in life, who remains youthful and mobile, has behind him an earlier life — or maybe several lives — during which he had a true love of his environment. The more strongly he expresses love for his environment, the longer he remains physically youthful in a following incarnation. An

individual prone to show antipathy towards his fellowmen, ages early in the next life. A body that shows the signs of age at a physically early age, stems from the life of a perverse critic, from a life of aversion and ill-will. Thus, we see that life can be influenced by a conscious intervention in Karma. A person capable of love in the present life can rest assured that in the next life he will have a body that reveals all the traits of youth. Individuals who become harsh critics at an early age will in the next life be people who are almost born with wrinkles! That is a radical expression, but it is based upon truth.

Thus, the laws of Karma reveal the connection between health and the spiritual life. Everybody will agree that this connection cannot be immediately obvious but that individual details must be doubted that a genuinely moral, sincere, conscientious soul is the future creator of a healthy body. But actual knowledge of this cannot be expected from one day to the next, nor can it be believed that a person afflicted with flaws of soul can be healed overnight. It should also be realised that one must rise above egoism and adopt a selfless mode of life that does not want to garner the fruits of its deeds immediately. What becomes habit, however, can react upon the physical body already in the present life. A proof of this is afforded by occult development which can acquire conscious influence not only upon the astral body but also upon the etheric body. An individual who achieves occult development learns how to influence not only his astral body but also his etheric body and his physical body. Through the transformation of habitual behaviour, a violent, choleric individual can become a gentle character, a highly emotional human being an equable, harmonious person. An occultist must change his habits in a comparatively short time. Genuine development pre-supposes that what a man learns does not remain mere teaching but penetrates into the etheric body. In an occultist it penetrates even into the physical body. He learns to control the heartbeat, the pulse beat and the breathing. A process that in ordinary life is distributed over many incarnations is therefore shortened. The process of Karma itself is shortened in the case of an occultist.

Much that will be discussed this Winter will become more intelligible to us when we learn of certain more intimate karmic connections, for example the difference between the karma of a beautiful and an ugly human being. What is the karma of a beautiful human being? Something comes into consideration there that at first seems incredible, nevertheless it is a fact. Beauty of the physical body is in many cases, not always but very often, a consequence of suffering endured in the preceding life. Suffering in the preceding life — physical and also soul-suffering — becomes beauty in a

subsequent life, beauty of the external physical body. In these cases, it is permissible to use an analogy which I have often applied. How does the beautiful pearl in a pearl-oyster originate? Actually, as the result of an illness. Approximately speaking, therefore, there is a karmic process which represents the connection of illness, of suffering, with beauty. This beauty is often bought at the cost of suffering and illness.

Wisdom too is in many respects bought at the cost of pain. It is not without interest that a certain example of outer investigation today confirms in many ways what occultists have said for thousands of years, namely, that wisdom is connected with pain and sufferings, with a life of earnestness and renunciation in the previous existence. It is sometimes very rewarding to consult ordinary scientific investigation. A book on the effects of thinking has recently been published. Its aim is to show how in the physiognomy of a human being there is engraved the quality and trend of his thinking. The author of the book who clearly does not know much about occultism has nevertheless discovered through outer observation that an impression of pain once endured can be recognised in the physiognomy of a thinker. Modern science is on the point of confirming ancient occult wisdom little by little. In the coming years this will be the case far more often than any learned scholar dreams of.

It will now be still easier for you to realise that one cannot give way to blind belief or submission to authority in connection with certain revelations of the history of spiritual life. Faced with the problem of understanding Karmic law in the case of a phenomenon such as Schopenhauer, whose whole world-conception was filled with a mood of pessimism, nobody possessed of deeper insight must believe that this pessimism represents the fundamental attitude of humanity in general. It is far rather the individual trait of Schopenhauer's soul, karmically forecast and brought about by a certain constitution of his etheric body. This pessimistic mood of his thinking can only be understood by examining the karmic aspect. In an earlier life — and this is an absolutely real explanation — a personality of this nature had had no opportunity of doing much good. Because of his position in life and vocation this man had been obliged to commit much evil and injustice. And this evil and injustice which he was fated — not by karma but by his vocation — to bring about, returned to him in the form of a certain feeling of antipathy towards the world he now encountered. This antipathy was the recapitulation of his own deeds. If you want to understand karma you should not adopt the fatalistic standpoint that everything is predestined. A man need not be condemned by his previous lives to carry out his present deeds. Adjustment is often made in the next

life. Thus, deeds are not always the fruits of an earlier life but in certain cases find their adjustment in a future speaking of the cause of the pessimistic mood in Schopenhauer.

We must strictly differentiate between everything a man accomplishes as his own individual deeds, deeds which proceed entirely from himself, and those made obligatory by his race, family and profession. Two Councillors may do the same thing because they happen to be Councillors but that too is exempted. They may however also perform utterly different deeds because they are different human beings. And that is what we are considering now. Deeds that stem from a man's personality — that is what meets him as his outer destiny in the next incarnation. If some individual finds himself in fortunate circumstances of life, if he enjoys a favourable destiny, this leads back to the just, ingenious and good deeds of an earlier life. If a man's circumstances in life are unfavourable, if he has many failures and is surrounded by adverse conditions — external circumstances are meant, not the qualities of the physical body — this equally leads back to personal deeds of the previous life. What an individual has accomplished as the result of his vocation and family circumstances is stored in his temperament and character. Thus, the destiny of a man is determined by his personal deeds in the preceding life. Vice versa, through good, intelligent and righteous deeds, he can bring about a favourable or unfavourable destiny in the next incarnation.

An individual who comes into contact with particular personalities has himself created the conditions for this in a preceding life. He had had something to do with these individuals and has himself now led them into his environment. Here is an example from the time of the Vehmic tribunals. (A German system of irregular Tribunal prevailing in Westphalia in the 14th and 15th centuries. More serious crimes were tried in secret night sessions.) One such tribunal was concerned with an execution. The victim was placed before masked judges who immediately gave effect to the judgment. This is a case where a man was condemned and executed. Occult investigation of his destiny in the earlier incarnations brought to light the fact that the individual who had been executed by the five judges had, at the time, when he was a chieftain, allowed these five persons to be murdered. His deed in days gone by had brought these five individuals as it were with magnetic force again into his life and they wreaked their vengeance upon him. This is a radical case, but it is founded upon universal law. You cannot come into contact with an individual who makes an impact upon your life if you have not yourself brought him into your orbit on the basis of earlier relationships. It may, of course, also he the

case that through general conditions, through his vocation or family a man is led into contact with individuals he had never yet encountered. But then, through their mutual behaviour, the foundation is laid for a meeting in the next incarnation, a meeting connected with the destinies and lives of the individuals concerned. You will realise that these illustrations of Karma are in many respects complicated and by no means so easy to explain. It is important to study these examples individually because only so can we really understand life.

It must again and again be stressed that the idea of Karma, rightly understood and to be found in Christianity, must never be thought to contradict the teaching of the Redemption. To many of you I have already spoken of the compatibility of the Christian teaching of the Redemption with the idea of Karma, but there are new listeners here. Many misunderstandings are to be found, due very often to the fact that numbers of people talk about *Spiritual Science* without much understanding. It is stated that Karma means simply that a man must take upon himself all the effects of his deeds. If he has committed some offence, he alone can redeem himself from his sin. From this point of view many Spiritual Scientists declare that the thought of the Redemption through Christ Jesus is unfounded, that Spiritual Science could not accept the idea of Redemption through another being, for every man must redeem himself. Christian Theologians dispute this, saying: We believe in the Redemption through Christ Jesus, but you believe in self-redemption. This is inconceivable.

Meanwhile, Karma is a kind of life account that can quite rightly be compared with a salesman's accounts. On the one side there are the debit entries and on the other the credit entries. They are added and the balance struck. It would be a peculiar salesman who said: I will do no more business in order that my balance shall not be upset. — Just as in every moment of a salesman's life a new transaction can be made, so at every moment through a new deed, new karma can be created. When somebody says: A man has himself brought about his suffering, he has deserved it, so I may not help him — this is so much nonsense. It is just as if one thousand marks would help you, but if I were to give them to you, I should upset your account book. — That would certainly not be the case! The sum of money lent would simply be entered in the account book. It is the same with life. Compensation must be made but it need not necessarily be made by oneself. Karma does not signify self-compensation but only that compensation shall be made through a deed. Now suppose you are a wealthy, powerful person who can help not only one but two. Then you can

intervene in the Karma of two human beings. Just because Karma exists you can intervene in the life accounts of both these two people. There are individuals who can help three, four, five people — indeed even hundreds. Such individuals will not say: I must not help those others because then I shall intervene in their Karma. — Far rather, they will help them.

Such help can be vouchsafed by a most mighty Being who once appeared in the world to those who account themselves His followers. This Being is Christ Jesus. The fact that the Redemption was brought about by a certain form of evil, does not contravene the law of Karma. The Redemption through Christ Jesus is perfectly compatible with the law of Karma, just as is the help given by the wealthy man to the bankrupt salesman. The misunderstandings arise from the fact that Spiritual Scientists do not basically understand Karma and Theologians have not bothered about it. It is precisely through the intrinsic nature and importance of the deed of a single sublime Being that the validity of the law of Karma is guaranteed. When, in the future, these things are rightly understood, it will become evident for the first time that Spiritual Science is not an opponent of any confession that has a genuine foundation and how it leads far rather to a true understanding of it. If you have discerned the law of Karma in a certain number of cases, you will feel that you have here perceived a deep necessity of spiritual life. Truth to tell, the law of Karma has been rightly understood only by one to whom it is not merely a piece of theoretic knowledge but has become part of his whole world of feeling and perception. Inner security and harmony then pervade the whole of life. And those people who again and again assert that the law of Karma leads to inactivity and lethargy, that it causes a person to abandon himself to his destiny and does not lead to freedom in life — such people have not made any endeavour to live in harmony with the law of Karma. To live in accordance with the law of Karma means to infuse courage and hope into the soul.

The law of Karma must above all throw light upon our future. We must think less about the past than about the future. It has been indicated in many ways that in compliance with the law of Karma a man can produce effects far into the future by preparing in his astral body the future configuration of the etheric body and in the course of further progress the future formation of the physical body. When you have grasped the implications of this you will realise the tremendous importance of these connections and what a deepening the idea of education, especially of that of peoples, will experience in the light of the law of Karma. If efforts are made today to induce human beings to live in conformity with the law of

Karma and to prepare the configuration of their future accordingly, they are at the same time preparing the future communities of peoples. After all, life in the future will consist of the reincarnated human beings of the present. Healthy races and especially healthy leaders of the future races will come into existence if human beings live on into the future intelligently, in accordance with the law of Karma. For if the single individual achieves perfection in some degree, he has an effect upon the organisms of the peoples and of races.

The actual mechanism of Karma is a matter for early discussion. The question is concerned with which forces are being activated when the astral characteristics of the present life are transmitted to the etheric body in the next life and which forces bring it about that the qualities established in the etheric body of the present life — habits and inclinations — are carried over into the physical predisposition of the next life. It is still more difficult to answer the following question: Which forces are at work in cases where a man's deeds in the present life determine his external environment in the next incarnation when he not only gathers around him the individuals with whom he has and previously had, something to do, but also takes his place within the world of Nature that surrounds him, in the plant world and animal world, also in the conditions of the race and society which he himself has prepared? What is the character of these forces which bring all this again to the individual concerned? How does it come about that two human beings who had some connection with each other in an earlier life and of whom one is reborn in America and the other in Europe are nevertheless led together? Such are the great questions which we will endeavour to answer next time. Briefly, how do the relationships of the one life form the relationships of the next? As we shall have many guests, this question will also be suitable for study at the general Meeting. Naturally, those who have been present at this series of lectures will be at an advantage. The title of the next lecture will be: The Technique of Karma.

Thus, consideration of an important question in life will have been dealt with today and next time. I ask you to bear in mind that what has been said consisted of selected cases, based upon actual occult facts. Everything that has been disclosed today on the subject of karmic connections leads back to actual investigation of the Karma of specific individuals. The study of Karma also gives us knowledge of how to evaluate, even in the present life, the connection between illness and specific characteristics, of the life of soul, especially the awakening of certain forces of the soul. So far those who have assimilated the lectures on Karma given here, what is said in general outline in the Architektenhaus lectures about illness and death,

suffering and evil, will have been amplified in greater detail. During this Winter special consideration will be given here and elsewhere to the place of the spiritual — scientific view of the world in practical life. In this way we shall strengthen the impulse and the insight ensuring that Spiritual Science is not presented as something impractical but that it is a factor in practical life itself.

4

Morality and Karma

Compassion is a fundamental element in the soul life

Source: [Morality and Karma](#) GA Unknown.

12 November 1910, Nuremberg

Today I must tell you a few things on morality and karma and tomorrow I shall speak on the appearance of Christ and reveal a few facts which have not yet been revealed.

Spiritual Science becomes really fruitful if we can observe its influence on our own life and if it becomes living substance within us. Anthroposophical principles can be looked upon as interesting doctrines, but theoretically it is difficult to gain a real conviction of the truth implied by the spiritual-scientific doctrines, in the real meaning of the word. Of course, all Anthroposophical facts discovered along the path of genuine spiritual-scientific investigation can be tested by the human intellect and recognized through logic; but if we take in spiritual-scientific truths we are still a long way from being able to test them. Among our audience many people prefer to tread an easier path, which is to accept spiritual truths on the authority of a teacher. This is far more comfortable. On the other hand, however, there is hardly any other alternative for the great majority of people, for the independent testing of spiritual-scientific truths is a very difficult path; the other path, of observing life in itself, is far easier. But if the laws of Karma hold good, life itself must take on a form which shows us how Karma works in the experiences of life and in the development of character. Those who strive after spiritual truths will more easily gain a conviction of these truths by observing facts supported by life itself.

I shall take two widely-spread qualities as a starting point in this lecture. Taken as moral qualities, there has always been a strong, instinctive repugnance against them. ENVY and FALSEHOOD have always been considered as a special moral failing. This special aversion may be seen in

the fact that in the case of no other human error is the repugnance so strong and instinctive as in the case of envy and falsehood. This feeling may be found in great men and in insignificant people. Benvenuto Cellini, who was a great man, once said that he felt himself capable of every kind of sin, but that he could not remember any real lie which he had told. Also Goethe found a certain relief in being able to say that he had never harboured any feeling of envy. Consequently the souls of the simplest people and the souls of highly developed men have an instinctive repugnance against envy and falsehood and defend themselves against them.

Without taking into consideration the Anthroposophical aspect it may be said, first of all, that envy and falsehood are visibly an offence against a fundamental element of social life: they are an offence against the feeling of compassion. Compassion does not only imply sharing another's grief and pain, but it also implies experiencing his value. Compassion is a quality which is not greatly developed among men. It still contains a great amount of egoism. Of Herder it is said, for instance (he intended to study medicine) that he fainted when he first entered an operating theatre where a corpse was to be dissected; he fainted not through compassion, but through weakness and egoism, because he could not bear that sight. Compassion must become less selfish; we should be able to rejoice at another person's success and rise; we should be able to look upon his good qualities without any feeling of bitterness.

Compassion is a fundamental element in the soul life which we share with others because all human soul experiences are connected with each other. Envy and falsehood in particular offend against the capacity of appraising another person's value. We damage our fellow man through envy and falsehood.

Envy and falsehood bring us in opposition to the course of the universe; by envy and falsehood we harm the laws which govern the world's course of events. They can easily be recognized as errors and people do not tolerate them.

As a rule both envy and falsehood have occult backgrounds. Certain mysterious laws hold sway, which easily escape our observation, and they work in such a way that both envy and falsehood can arise in the same person in later years.

Envy does not always take on the form of conscious green envy. Of course, if anyone is conscious of this feeling, he tries to get rid of it. Envy as such is a quality rooted in the astral body of man. We know that feelings, passions, etc. should be looked for in the astral body. There is a certain law according to which qualities arising in the astral body and which are so detestable that we wish to get rid of them, gradually insinuate themselves into the etheric body. There they take on delusive aspects and appear in the guise of certain definite judgments which we pass on other people. No envy is contained in these judgments, yet we criticize people and find everything in them bad. This is a secret form of envy which creeps into our etheric body. There it takes on the form of an opinion, of a critical judgment. We say: This person has done this or that, and our statement may seem perfectly correct; nevertheless it contains envy in a masked form. What has taken place? A very significant process has taken place.

We know that the human soul passes through many incarnations and that there was a moment in the development of mankind when the tempters, Lucifer and Ahriman, crept into the human soul. In what form do Lucifer and Ahriman live within us today? This is not easy to discover without the aid of clairvoyant investigation, and Goethe expressed a deep truth when he said: "Folks do not notice the Devil, even when he takes them by the scruff of the neck!" IN fact, it is possible to ignore the devil; it is possible not to see him. From the standpoint of modern natural science it is easy to say that Mephistopheles does not exist; nevertheless, Lucifer and Ahriman live in human nature. Ahriman lives in the etheric body and Lucifer in the astral body of man.

Lucifer is a power that tempts the human soul by drawing it down morally and by leading it away from its origin. He casts us into the depths of earthly nature and we should beware of this. Lucifer is the power that draws us down into the depths of passion.

Ahriman, on the other hand, is the spirit of falsehood and error and he falsifies our judgments.

Both Lucifer and Ahriman are powers which are hostile to human progress. Yet they get on very well with each other. Envy is a quality in which the Luciferic power comes to expression. It is a detestable quality and that is why people dislike it. They seek to get rid of it, to overcome it and drive it away. When a person first discovers that his soul is filled with

envy, he begins to fight against Lucifer, the source of envy. What does Lucifer do in that case? He simply hands over the matter to Ahriman, and Ahriman darkens the human judgment.

When we fight against Lucifer in the astral body, Ahriman can easily insinuate himself into the etheric body, darkening our judgments on other people. This is falsehood and falsehood is an Ahrimanic quality.

People also feel a strong dislike for falsehood and they try to fight against it. When we try to overcome falsehood, we can see that Ahriman hands over the scepter to Lucifer, so that a quality creeps into the astral body which appears in the form of an extremely pronounced EGOISM. Egoism is restrained falsehood.

These two qualities, falsehood and envy, are a crass expression of the way in which Lucifer and Ahriman work within the human soul.

It is possible to observe the influence of envy and falsehood even in the course of a single incarnation. Let us now speak of facts which prove the truth of Anthroposophical teachings. Let us observe a certain period in a person's life and let us suppose that this person was strongly addicted to telling lies. The law of Karma would in that case exercise its influence and we should wait until this becomes manifest. It is, however, possible to observe in the present incarnation the connection which exists between an earlier and a later period of life. A study of human life may show us that a person perhaps lost the habit of telling lies — for life itself is a great school — but he will reveal instead a new, plainly marked characteristic: a certain timidity. There are people who cannot look us in the face and it is possible to observe a certain relationship between a feeling of shyness in later life and hypocrisy at some earlier period of life.

Another example: A person may be filled with the feeling of envy. When this has disappeared, when it has been overcome, we can observe that at some later period of life such a person is dependent on others; he will lack independence in the way in which he faces life — be a weak and swaying person.

These connections between falsehood and shyness, envy and lack of independence, which can already be observed in one and the same incarnation, are Karmic connections.

In reality, Karma works in such a way that a faint fulfillment of its laws already comes to expression in one and the same incarnation, though the decisive influence upon man's character only appears in the next incarnation. Helplessness and lack of independence will arise in old age, when envy appeared during youth. This is a faint nuance of the influence of Karma; it remains after death, works throughout kamaloka, etc., and it will be contained in the forces which build up the next life; it will become interwoven with the fundamental character which expresses itself in the three bodies: the physical, etheric and astral bodies.

Goethe expressed this in a very fine way by saying: The desires of our youth are fully realized in our old age. This applies, of course, both to good and bad desires.

In the next life the character qualities build up the three bodies, our character is then the architect of these three bodies. If envy has been a fundamental quality during one incarnation, it will exercise an influence upon the three bodies during the next incarnation and produce, as a result, a weak physical constitution. It works upon the human organism during the next incarnation.

When we see someone facing life in a helpless and dependent way, we must say: "Envy must have been at work during his past incarnation," and we should behave towards him accordingly. If the laws of Karma hold good, it will soon appear whether our attitude is justified. When we see someone entering life with bad health and a weak constitution, we may take for granted that envy played a certain part in his life during his past incarnation.

When there is such a person in our environment, we must say that Karma led us together with him for a definite purpose: perhaps we were the object of his former envy. What can we now do for him? If Karma is a fact which can be reasonably accepted, if it is a valid truth, it should become manifest that by adopting the right attitude towards such a physically weak person in our environment, a good result can be achieved. What he needs is forgiveness; he needs to encounter this forgiving attitude in the widest measure. Under the condition that we have something to forgive him, we should envelop him in an atmosphere of forgiveness. "You have to forgive him something — therefore do it"; this is what we say to ourselves, but not to HIM — we shall act accordingly and await the result, and we shall see him gaining health and strength. Simply try to do what is right and the

result will not fail to appear. This is how we may live in accordance with the laws of Karma and the whole of Spiritual Science will then become living substance.

Now someone might come along and say: It is quite right that things should have gone wrong with that person, for this is the retribution for what he did during his past incarnation. It is very reasonable that things should have taken this course, because his Karma demands it. People who say this do not understand Karma, for to understand Karma we must know that another person's Karma does not concern us at all! The fulfillment of Karma will come of its own accord; our only task is to help him! We must, however, draw in everything which might bring about a favourable change in his Karma. To know and to feel this forms part of a deep understanding of Karma and its laws. It is another matter when someone is passing through an esoteric development; in that case advice may be given as to the best way in which he can live out his Karma.

Moral qualities in fact produce results; they bring about Karmic effects. They may change during one incarnation. But in the next incarnation they must descend right down into the physical organism.

We said that falsehood may change into timidity during one and the same incarnation, so that a person withdraws into himself. All the more will falsehood in one incarnation produce timidity in the next incarnation. Such a person is born as a timid soul, full of fears. He will not only be shy towards the people of his environment, but he will also fall a prey to certain pathological conditions of fear. The timidity which appeared in one incarnation as a slight karmic effect of falsehood, will therefore appear in the next incarnation as a fundamental organic quality also of the physical body.

What is the right attitude towards a person in whose case we must assume that he told many lies during his past incarnation? We say to ourselves — we do not say this to him — and this should determine our actions: He will have told us many lies during a past incarnation; he misled us. We must try to bring him fruitful and valuable truths. Those who are led together with him by Karma must try to penetrate into his soul with love and devotion. Falsehood must be recompensed by truth; these are two extremes which bring about a kind of compensation.

The secret of the whole matter is that a favourable influence cannot be exercised upon him by anyone, but just by those who are karmically connected with him. Those who adopt this attitude will see what good results can be achieved if he brings him positive truths and has real understanding for him.

Karma is a real law; its result will appear in a very peculiar way. If we lovingly penetrate into the weaknesses of such people, our influence upon them will be an immense relief to them and bring them freedom and health. If we can immerse ourselves completely in them, we shall have a rejuvenating influence upon such people.

Our attitude towards people may be an understanding one or a critical one. What is the effect? We may help them or be unable to help them. We may come towards a person with understanding; i.e., immerse ourselves lovingly in his soul, with a real understanding for his weaknesses, if Karma demands this from us, as a task. But we may also criticize him and remain by this.

Let us observe life in both cases. What is the effect of criticism and rebuke upon the object of such rebuke? One effect can be that the reproaches helped him, but it may also be otherwise. People who habitually criticize and rebuke others will also bring about a certain result: a certain feeling of isolation will take hold of them; they will feel themselves cut off from the others.

Let us compare this with the effects produced in one incarnation, when we immerse ourselves with love and understanding in the other person's soul, in spite of his failings. In this case, too, the result may be a good one or a bad one, but the effect upon the soul will undoubtedly be a favourable one.

This shows us that entirely different laws hold sway when we remain standing, as it were, by criticism and rebuke, or when we progress as far as real understanding. Rebuke recoils upon ourselves and forms new Karma, but understanding gives rise to a store of wealth in the other soul; it dissolves Karma, smoothens it and eliminates it.

This is a very significant fact in life. Let us now recapitulate the result of our observations in a sentence which constitutes a deep truth; namely, that we are in the position to be of very little help to ourselves, and that we can, on the other hand, harm ourselves greatly. We can, however, be of

great help to others, whereas we cannot cause them much harm by our own errors. Our good qualities can therefore be of great help to others; our bad qualities cause us great harm, but cannot cause much harm to others, at least not permanently.

This is a very peculiar law. It shows the effect of Karma in one and the same incarnation: For one who helps another person by his good qualities and by immersing himself lovingly in his soul, may be sure of a favourable effect in his own life at some later period. Do not say that this is egoism, that it is selfish to be good and noble. No, goodness must be something quite natural, and its good effect at some later time arises as a natural consequence.

If we do not go beyond our own interests, if we have no understanding for other people and only criticize them, no good effects will arise. The strange thing is that unless we are good towards others we cannot progress; this is a condition for our own progress.

This is a fundamental law passing over from one incarnation to the other, and appearing in a wonderful way. If in one incarnation we are instinctively led to goodness, if a kind of life instinct draws us towards a good life, this will appear in the next life as Spiritual Science, which will already have exercised its influence. Let us for instance imagine a person who was good to us at a time when we were not yet able to guide ourselves. Here we see a great difference between the different qualities of good — there are the good things in life which we do not deserve (we speak of undeserved good) and we can see that in one case its effect may be a favourable one, whereas in another case it is useless.

The clairvoyant may now perceive something quite special: Another person's good actions towards us, at a time in which we did not deserve them, appear as goodness which we earned back from him. If this is the case, their effect upon us will be a good one; if this is not the case, they cannot have any good effect upon us. When we observe the workings of Karma we should bear in mind that every action has its effect, even though it may not immediately appear to the physical eye.

The paths of Karma are very intricate paths, but if we study life we may understand them, for life contains the proofs for the way in which Karma works in the world. If we study Karma and act accordingly, the success in life itself will show us that we went out from a real law, which holds good.

There are three ways in which we can face Karma: We may not believe in it at all; we may believe in it, and then we may apply the test by observing life itself. This will enable us to recognize the truth of its laws. Spiritual Science is not only a theoretical truth, but a search for proofs which establish this truth in life itself.

5

Free Will and Karma in the Future of Human Evolution

We are now speaking, on the one hand, of the deeper nature of material existence

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There are certain deeper questions of karmic connection concerning more especially our human influence upon karma, particularly upon that of other people, and concerning also the changing of the direction of karma, be it to a greater or less extent. Such questions as these one can neither answer nor even give an idea of how they ought to be answered, without touching, as we shall today, upon certain important secrets of our world existence. They may perhaps arise out of what has been said, if we follow up what has been broached and had light thrown upon it from one side or another.

We may ask what happens in a person's karma when by reason of his previous acts or experiences there has arisen a necessity for illness to compensate for these acts and experiences, and this person is really healed through human assistance by means of remedies or other intervention. What does this signify and in what way is such a fact related to a deeper conception of karmic law?

Now I will begin by saying that in order to throw any important light at all upon this question, things must be touched upon which are far removed from the science and the present thought of today and which may, so to say, only be spoken of amongst Anthroposophists who, having absorbed some of the truths relating to the deeper foundations of existence, have already prepared themselves for such things, and have acquired a perception of how things which today can only be indicated, may nevertheless be fully proved. I should like, however, to take this opportunity of asking one thing of you. I am today compelled to talk about

the deeper foundations of the earth's existence which I shall endeavour to express as precisely as possible. But this would be wrong if it were used in another connection or spoken of without any connection at all, and would lead to one misunderstanding after another. I ask you for the present just to accept it only, and make no other use of it. I must also make a point, regarding these things, that they should not be handed on; that no one should consider them as a teaching which may in any way spread further; for only the connection justifies such a statement, and such a statement is justifiable only when it is backed by the consciousness that can coin suitable words to express thoughts of this kind.

We are now speaking, on the one hand, of the deeper nature of material existence, and on the other, of the nature of soul existence. We must today acquire a deeper comprehension of what pertains to the soul and to the material world. This is, indeed, necessary for a quite definite reason — for the reason given in the previous lectures when we said that the soul of man can penetrate more or less deeply into matter. We described yesterday the nature of the male by saying that in a man the soul penetrates deeper into matter, while in the female the soul holds back in a certain way and is more independent of matter. We saw that much of karmic experience depends upon how the penetration of the soul into matter takes place. We saw also how certain illnesses in one incarnation appear as the karmic consequences of errors made by the soul in former incarnations when it worked at its deeds, experiences and impulses. Then on the way between death and a new birth the soul acquired the tendency to transform into matter that which was formerly only a characteristic, a mere influence in the soul; so it now permeates the body. Because the human being is then permeated by a soul which has also absorbed either the luciferic or ahrimanic influence, the human substance will in consequence be damaged. Here is to be found the cause of illness, and we may therefore say: In a sick body there dwells a damaged soul which has come under a wrong influence — a luciferic or ahrimanic influence; and the moment we are able to remove these influences from the soul, the normal relationship of soul and the body should come about, and health should be re-established. What then is the relation between these two members of the earthly human existence of which we are now speaking, matter and soul? What are they in their deeper nature?

The man of the present day is generally of the opinion that the answer to the question, 'Of what does matter consist? What is the soul?' — if it could be given at all — must prove to be the same all over the world. I do not think it would be easy for him to understand that for the beings who lived

upon the old Moon, the answer to these questions must be quite different from those of beings who live upon the Earth. For existence is so much in the throes of evolution, that even the ideas may alter which a being may have about the deeper foundations of his own nature; so that the answer to this question, 'What is matter, what is the soul?' must also vary. It must at once be emphasised that the answers which will be given are only those which the earth-man can make, and are of significance only to the earth-man.

A person will at first judge 'matter' according to what confronts him in the external world in the shape of different beings and things, and everything which makes an impression upon him in any way. Then he discovers that there are different sorts of matter. But I need not go very far into that, for you may find in all the ordinary books those expositions which could be given here if we had time enough. These differences in matter present themselves to man when he sees the different metals, gold, copper, lead, and so on, or when he sees anything that does not belong to this category. You know, too, that chemistry traces these different materials back to certain fundamental substances of matter, called 'elements.' These elements, even in the nineteenth century, were still considered to be substances possessing certain properties which did not admit of being further divided. But in the case of a substance such as water, we are able to separate it into hydrogen and oxygen, yet in hydrogen and oxygen themselves we have substances which, according to the chemistry of the nineteenth century, were incapable of being further divided. One could distinguish about seventy such elements. You will doubtless also know that owing to phenomena which have been produced in connection with a few special elements — radium, for instance — and also owing to various phenomena produced in the study of electricity, the idea of the elements has been shaken in many ways. One has come to the conclusion that the seventy elements were only temporary limitations of matter, and that one could trace back the possibility of subdivision to a fundamental substance, which then through inner combinations, through the nature of its inner elementary being, manifests at one time as gold, at another time as potash, lime, and so on.

These scientific theories vary; and just as the scientific theories changed in 'each fifty years' of the nineteenth century, so it came about that certain physicists saw in matter certain entities which are charged with electricity; just as the ionic theory is now in fashion — for there are fashions in science — in the same way at no distant future other scientific methods will exist, and our idea of the constitution of matter will be quite different. These are

facts. Scientific opinions are changeable, and must be changeable, for they depend altogether upon those facts which are of significance for one particular epoch. The teachings of Spiritual Science on the other hand continue through all ages — as long as there are civilisations on the earth — and will continue as long as these civilisations exist. It has always had the same comprehensive view regarding the nature of material existence and matter; and in order to lead you on to what Spiritual Science looks upon as the essential part of matter and of substance, I should like to say the following:

You all know that ice is a solid body — not through its own nature, but through external circumstances. It at once ceases to be a solid if we raise the temperature sufficiently; it then becomes a fluid substance. Therefore it does not depend upon what is in a substance itself as to what form it takes in the external world, but upon the entire conditions of the universe surrounding it. We can then further bring heat to this substance, and out of the water we can, after a certain point, produce steam. We have ice, water, steam, and through the raising of the temperature we have caused what we may describe as 'the appearance of matter in manifold forms.' Thus we have to distinguish in matter that the appearance it presents to us does not come out of an inner constitution, but that the manner in which it confronts us depends upon the general constitution of the universe, and that one must not isolate any part of the whole universe into individual substances. Now the methods of modern science cannot reach where Spiritual Science is able to reach. The science of today can never, by means of the methods at its disposal, bring the substance of ice — which, when the temperature is increased, is first made fluidic and then turned into steam — into the final condition attainable on earth, into which every substance can be transmuted. It is not possible today, by scientific means, to bring about conditions which show that 'if you take gold and rarefy it as far as it can be rarefied upon the earth, you will bring it at last to a state which could equally be reached by silver or by copper.' Spiritual Science can do this because it is based upon the methods of spiritual research; is thus able to observe how, in the spaces between substances, there is always a uniform substance everywhere which represents the extreme limit to which all matter is reducible. Spiritual research discovers a condition of dissolution in which all materials are reduced to a common basis, but what then appears there is no longer matter, but something which lies beyond all the specialised forms of matter around us. Every single substance, be it gold, silver, or any other substance, is there seen to be a condensation of this fundamental substance, which is really no longer matter. There is a fundamental essence of our material earth existence out of which all

matter only comes into being by a condensing process, and to the question: What is this fundamental substance of our earth existence, Spiritual Science gives the answer: '*Every substance upon the earth is condensed light.*' There is nothing in material existence in any form whatever which is anything but condensed light. Hence you see that to those who know the facts, there can be no necessity for such a theory as that of the 'vibration hypothesis' of the nineteenth century. Therein one sought to find light by methods which themselves are coarser than the light itself. Light cannot be traced back to anything else in our material existence. Wherever you reach out and touch a substance, there you have condensed, compressed light. All matter is, in its essence, light.

We have thus indicated one side of the question from the point of view of Spiritual Science. We have seen that light is the foundation of all material existence. If we look at the material human body, that also, inasmuch as it consists of matter, is nothing but a substance woven out of light. Inasmuch as man is a material being, he is composed of light.

Let us now consider the other question: 'Of what does the soul consist?' If we were to make research in the same way, by means of the methods of Spiritual Science, into the substance, into the really fundamental essence of the soul, then it would appear that just as all matter is compressed light, so all the different phenomena of the soul upon earth are modifications, are manifold transformations of that which must be called, if we truly realise the fundamental meaning of the word: love. Every stirring of the soul, wherever it appears, is in some way a modification of love, and if the inner and the outer are, as it were, intermingled, impressed into one another in man, we find also that his outer bodily part is woven out of light, and his inner soul is woven spiritually out of love. Love and light are, indeed, in some way interwoven in all the phenomena of our earth existence, and anyone who wishes to understand things as explained by Spiritual Science, will first of all ask: To what extent are love and light interwoven?

Love and light are the two elements, the two component parts of all earthly existence: love as the soul part, and light as the outer material part.

Now, however, another fact comes in. For both these elements, light and love, which would otherwise be side by side throughout the great course of the world existence, there must be found an intermediary, weaving the one element into the other — light into love. This must needs be a power which has no particular interest in love, which thus weaves light into the element

of love — a power which is interested only in causing the light to be spread abroad to as great an extent as possible, and therefore causes light to stream into the element of love. Such a power cannot be terrestrial for the earth is the *Cosmos of Love*; and its mission is to weave love in everywhere. Anything, therefore, which is bound up with the earth existence can have no interest which is not to some degree influenced by love.

It is the luciferic beings which act here — for they remained behind upon the Moon upon the *Cosmos of Wisdom*. They are particularly interested in weaving light into love. The luciferic beings are everywhere at work when our inner part which is actually woven out of love comes into any sort of connection with light, in whatsoever form it may be found; and we are confronted with light in all material existence. Wheresoever we come into connection with light, the luciferic beings enter, and the luciferic influence becomes woven into love. In that way man first, in the course of his incarnations, entered the luciferic element. Lucifer has woven himself into the element of love; and all that is formed from love has the impress of Lucifer, which alone can bring us what causes love to be not merely a self-abandonment, but permeates it in its innermost being with wisdom. Otherwise, without this wisdom, love would be an impersonal force in man for which he could not be responsible. But in this way love becomes the essential force of the Ego where that luciferic element is woven, which otherwise is only to be found outside in matter. Thus it becomes possible for our inner being which, during earth existence, should receive the attribute of love in its fullness, to be permeated besides by everything that may be described as an activity of Lucifer, and from this side leads to a penetration of external matter; so that which is woven out of light is not interwoven with love alone, but with love that is permeated by Lucifer. When man takes up the luciferic — element, he interweaves into the material part of his own body a soul which is, it is true, woven out of love, but into which the luciferic element is interwoven. It is that love which is permeated with the luciferic element, which impregnates matter and is the cause of illness working out from within. In connection with what we have already mentioned as being a necessary consequence of an illness proceeding from a luciferic element, we may say that the ensuing pain, which we have seen is a consequence of the Luciferic element, shows us the effect of the working of the karmic law. So the consequences of an act or a temptation coming from Lucifer are experienced karmically and the pain itself indicates what should lead to the overcoming of the consequences in question.

Now ought we to help in such a case or not? Ought we in any way to cancel what has pressed in from the luciferic element with all its consequences working out in pain?

Remembering the answer to our question as to the nature of the soul, it follows of necessity that we have the right to do this only if we find the means, in the case of a man who has the luciferic element in him which caused his illness, to expel that luciferic element in the right way. What is the remedy which exerts a stronger action, so that the luciferic element is driven out. What is it which has been defiled by the luciferic element on our earth? It is love! Hence only by means of love can we give real help for karma to work out in the right way. Finally we must see in that element of love which has been psychically influenced by Lucifer resulting in illness, a force which must be affected by another force. We must pour in love. All those acts of healing dependent upon what we may call a 'psychic healing process' must have the characteristic that love is part of the process. In some form or other all psychic healing depends on a stream of love, which we pour into another person as a balsam. All that is done in this domain must finally be traced back to love; and this can be done. Even if we set simple psychic factors in action; if we assist another, perhaps, only to overcome depression, this can be traced back to love. All arises from the impulse of love, from simpler processes of healing, to that which is often, in amateur fashion called 'magnetic healing.' What does the healer communicate to the one to be healed? It is, to use an expression of physics, an 'interchange of tensions.' Certain processes in the etheric body of the healer create with the person to be healed a sort of polarity. Polarity arises just as it would arise in an abstract sense, when one kind of electricity, say positive, is produced and then the corresponding electricity — the negative — appears. Thus polarities are created, and this act must be conceived as emanating from sacrifice. One evokes in oneself a process which is not intended to be significant to oneself only, for then one would call forth one process only; in this case, however, the process is intended in addition to induce a polarity in another person, and this polarity, which naturally depends upon a contact between the healer and the person to be healed, is, in the fullest sense of the word, the sacrifice of a force which is no other than the transmuted action of love. That is what is really active in these psychic healings — a transmuted power of love. We must clearly understand that without this fundamental love-force the healing will not lead to the right goal. But these processes of love need not always run their course [so] that the person is fully aware of them with his ordinary day-consciousness; they run their course also in the region of the subconscious. In that which is considered as the technique of the healing

process, even to the way in which the movements of the hands are made, and technically reduced to a system, we have the reflection of a sacrificial act. Therefore even where we do not see the direct connection in a process of healing, when we do not see what is being done, we have, nevertheless, before us an act of love, although the action may be completely transformed to a mere technique.

Since the soul consists fundamentally of love, we can assist with psychic factors. And these processes apparently lie very near the periphery of human nature, and by such factors of healing that which in its essence consists of love is enriched by what it requires in the way of love. Thus on the one side we see how we can help, so that, after being caught in the toils of Lucifer, the sufferer is able to free himself again. Because love is the fundamental essence of the soul, we may, indeed, influence the direction of karma.

On the other hand, we may ask, what has become of the substance woven from light in which the soul dwells?

Take the body — the outer man in his material part. If through a karmic process there had not been imprinted from out of the soul into matter a love substance such as is permeated by Lucifer or Ahriman; if a pure love substance only had poured in, it would not have been impurifying, or damaging to the substance woven out of light. If love alone were to flow into matter, it would then so flow into the human body that the latter could not be damaged. It is only because a love which has absorbed luciferic or ahrimanic forces can penetrate that the substance woven out of light becomes less perfect than it was originally intended to be. Therefore it is only through pouring into man of the luciferic or ahrimanic influences during his consecutive incarnations, that the human organisation is not what it might be. If it were as it ought to be, it would manifest healthy human substance; but because it has absorbed the activities of Lucifer and Ahriman, sickness and disease result.

How can we draw from outside those influences which have flowed in from an imperfect soul, that is, from a wrong love substance? What happens to the body by this influx of something which is faulty? According to Spiritual Science something happens which turns light in some way into its opposite. Light has its opposite in darkness or obscurity. Everything really presenting itself — strange as it may sound — as the defilement of that which is woven out of light, is a darkness woven out of a luciferic or ahrimanic influence. Thus we see darkness woven into the human

substance. But this darkness was only thus interwoven because the human body has become the bearer of the Ego that lives on through the incarnations. This was formerly not there. Only a *human* body can be subject to this corruption, for such a corruption was formerly not contained in that which was woven out of light.

Man today draws the base of his material life out of what he has gradually rejected in the course of evolution — that is, the animal kingdom, the vegetable kingdom, and the mineral kingdom. These also contain the different substances woven out of light for earth existence. But in none of these substances are there any of the influences which, in the course of human karma have acted on the organism through the soul. In the three kingdoms around us, therefore, man cannot through his luciferic or ahrimanic influence, as emanating from his love forces, have a defiling effect. Nothing of him is here. And what in man has been defiled is spread around him in all its purity. Let us consider a mineral substance, a salt or any other substance which man has also within him, or might have within him. But in him it is interwoven with the love substance defiled by Lucifer or Ahriman. Outside, however, it is pure. Thus every substance outside is distinguished from that which man bears within him. Externally it is always different from what it is in man, because in him it is interwoven with the ahrimanic or luciferic influence. That is the reason why, for everything of external substance which can be more or less defiled by man, there must be something which can be found externally representing the same thing in its pure condition. *That which exists in the world in its purity, is the external cure for the corresponding substance in its damaged state.* If you apply this in the right way to the human being, you then have the specific for the corresponding injury.

Thus we find in quite an objective way, what may be applied to the human body as a remedy. Here is the injury characterised as a form of darkness — and that which is not yet dark as the outer woven pure light; and we see why we are able to remove the darkness to be found in man if we bring pure substance woven from light to bear upon him. Thus we have a specific remedy for the injury. Now attention has often been drawn to the fact that Anthroposophists in particular should not fall into the narrow-minded error of denying that in such cases there really is a specific remedy against this or that injury, or which beneficially affects this or the other organ. It has often been said that the organism has within it the forces with which to help itself. Even although the Vienna School of Nihilistic Therapeutics may be right in its assertion that by calling up the opposing

forces we can bring about a cure, we may nevertheless help on the cure by specific remedies. Here we see a parallel which one may describe from Spiritual Science.

From what I have said about diphtheria, for instance, you may gather that the karmic causes have in this case particularly affected the astral body. Now closely related to the astral body is the animal kingdom. You will always find in those forms of illness closer connected with the astral body, that medical science, unconsciously driven by a dim impulse, seeks for remedies from the animal kingdom. For such illnesses whose causes lie in the etheric body, science seeks for remedies out of the vegetable kingdom. An interesting lecture might be given about the relation of the purple foxglove to certain illnesses of the heart. These are things which, inasmuch as they are based on truth, are not right for five years only — as one doctor states — and then begin to be wrong — as in the case when only external symptoms are taken into consideration. But there is a certain treasure of remedies which can always in some way be traced back to some connection with Spiritual Science, which have been inherited without any knowledge whence they came. Just as today the astronomers do not know that the theory of Kant and Laplace came from the mystery schools of the Middle Ages, so people do not know whence came these real valuable remedies. Causes of illness, which are connected with the nature of the physical body, lead to the use of remedies from the mineral kingdom.

A simple consideration of these analogous views will provide a fingerpost for these matters. Through his connection with the surrounding world, man can be helped from two different sides: on the one hand bringing him transmuted love from the psychic method of healing and on the other hand by bringing him transmuted light in various ways by those processes which are connected with external methods of healing. Everything which can be done is brought about either by inner psychic means — by love — or by the external means of densified light. When one day science has advanced so far as to learn to believe in the super-sensible and in the saying: 'Matter is a form of condensed light,' then a spiritual light will be thrown by these words upon the systematic research on external remedies. Hence we see that what during long ages, from the mystery schools of old Egypt and old Greece, was gradually added to the treasure of healing is not mere nonsense, but that in all these things there is a sound kernel. Anthroposophy does not exist in order to attack a certain school of medicine, and to say, 'There they give people poisons!' The word poison today works as a suggestion, and people do not reflect how relative this

word is. For what is 'poison'? Every substance may be a poison. It is only a question of the methods of healing and of how much is taken at a time. Water is a strong poison, if one takes ten bucketfuls at one time. The results of this, considered chemically, are not very different from what they would be if one gave a person any other substance. It depends always upon the quantity, for all these ideas are relative.

From what we have gone into today, we can be glad that for every injury we can do to injure our body, there is to be found in surrounding nature, which now appears to us as the world, that which will make it whole again. It is also a beautiful relationship that we have for the external world, and we may rejoice not only because we see the beautiful flowers and the mountains glowing in the sunlight, but also because our surroundings are so intimately connected with what is in man himself, good or bad. We can rejoice in nature, not only for what appeals at first sight, but the deeper we go into what has condensed into external material existence, the more we shall find that this nature which causes us to rejoice has within it at the same time the mighty healer for all the damage man can cause himself. Somewhere in nature the remedy is concealed. It is a question, not only of understanding the language of the healer, but also of obeying it and really carrying it out. Today it is in most cases impossible for us to hear the voice of healing nature because our misunderstanding of light, and the darkness which has penetrated into knowledge has in many respects brought about conditions preventing us from hearing. Therefore we must clearly understand that where in one case no help can properly be given, where, on account of karmic connections, some suffering may not properly be lessened, this does not mean that it absolutely could not be done.

Here again we see a remarkable connection which allows us to perceive the whole great world, inclusive of mankind, as *One Being*. In the sayings: '*Matter is woven light,*' and '*the soul is in some way or other diluted love,*' are to be found the keys of innumerable secrets of earth existence. But these hold good only for the earth existence, and would not concern any other domain of the world existence. Thus we have shown nothing less than that we, if in any way we alter the direction of karma, unite ourselves in one or the other case with the elements composing our earth existence: on the one side with light which has become matter — and on the other side with love which has become soul. We either draw the remedies out of our surroundings, out of the condensed light, or out of our own soul by the healing loving act, the sacrificial act, and we then heal with the soul-forces obtained from love. We unite ourselves with what is most deeply justified upon the earth, when, on the one hand, we unite ourselves with light and

on the other with love. All earth conditions are in some way conditions of balance between light and love and everything unhealthy is a disturbance of that balance. If the disturbance is in love, we can then help by unfolding the forces of love; and if the disturbance is in light, we can then help by somehow providing for ourselves, out of the universe, that light which is able to dissolve the darkness within us.

These are the fundamental ways of help, and we see again how everything depends upon the balance of opposites. Light and love are polar opposites and on their being interwoven depend ultimately all the psychic and material processes of our life. Therefore in all the spheres of human life, evolution continues from epoch to epoch with the balance inclining first to one side and then swinging back to the other, so that evolution resembles the surging of waves. This motion of an unstable equilibrium throws light even on the most complex processes of civilisation. Take a period when certain *injuries* entered into the evolution of mankind because man contemplated only [the] inner and neglected the outer, for example, in the Middle Ages. It was then that through the blossoming of the mystical side, the external remained unheeded and errors occurred not only in knowledge but in action. Then followed the age that was repelled by mysticism, and was attracted by the outer world so as to make the pendulum swing to the opposite side.

Here is the transition from the Middle Ages to modern times and many such disturbances of the balance, manifest in different ways.

In this connection I should like to note that just in such times as our own, a characteristic in many people is that they completely forget, and pay no attention to, that which one may call 'the consciousness of a super-sensible world.' They pay no attention whatever to the fact that there is a spiritual world, and they therefore turn away their thoughts from it. In such an age — or in all such ages — there is always in certain respects a counterpart to be found. I should like to show you this in a very simple manner.

When there are people upon the physical plane who are so absorbed in the physical that they completely forget the spiritual, then a contrary tendency appears among those souls who are living in the spiritual world between death and a new birth — a tendency which works over from the physical into the spiritual plane — impelling them to occupy themselves with the influences which act out of the spiritual world into the physical. It is this which brings about in the physical world the intervention by souls who are still in that state before birth. These souls work down into the

physical world according to the means which offer and they are able to work indirectly through persons who are more sensitive to such influence from the spiritual world. In order to make this clearer, one must not accept everything that purports to be a revelation from a Spiritual world. We must distinguish the real characteristic cases in which the dead are anxious show in a palpable manner that there is indeed a spiritual world. Because there are so many people completely in the dark, who have woven so much darkness into themselves that they wish to know nothing about the spiritual world, there are, on the other hand, among the dead many who have the impulse to work into the physical world. Such things generally occur when nothing is done deliberately to bring them about on the physical plane and they occur without special preparation.

You will find much proof of these things collected in the book by our friend, Ludwig Deinhard, *Das Mysterium des Menschen (The Mystery of Man)*. Here much has been collected and systematised which is just what one needs, and which in the scientific literature of to-day is so scattered that it is impossible for everyone to gather it together. Therefore it is a good thing to have in this book a collection of these spiritual facts, which, as you now see, are eminently characteristic of one aspect of our age. You will find very aptly described in this book the characteristic fact of an investigator, who by materialistic methods had in his earth life endeavoured to give every possible proof of the spiritual world — I mean the late Frederick Myers — and who after his death was strongly impelled to show to mankind by means of radiations from the spiritual world and by the help of the spiritual world, what he had endeavoured to do when here.

This is intended to illustrate how in the world and in world affairs we see continual disturbances of the balance, and then again the efforts for the restoring of the balance.

This continual disturbance and restoration of the balance between the two elements of light and love is fundamental for us; and in human karma, from incarnation to incarnation, both work to restore the disturbed condition. Karma, working its serpentine way through incarnations is just such a disturbed balance, until man, after all his incarnations, shall at last create the final balance which can be reached upon earth. Having fulfilled his mission on earth, he evolves then into a new planetary form.

I have endeavoured to set forth a few facts, without which a deeper establishment of karmic connections and laws would be impossible. I have not shrunk from touching to-day upon those mysteries for which our

modern science will not for a long time be ripe: Matter is in reality woven light, and that which belongs to the soul is in some way or other refined love. These are ancient occult sayings, but they are sayings which will for all time remain true and will prove fruitful for human evolution, not only for knowledge, but also for human work and action.

6

Facing Karma

To be a good person is one of the most difficult tasks

Source: [Facing Karma](#) GA 130.

8 February 1912, Vienna

Translator Unknown

At the end of the two public lectures I have given in this city, I emphasized that anthroposophy should not be considered a theory or mere science, nor as knowledge in the ordinary sense. It is rather something that grows in our souls from mere knowledge and theory into immediate life, into an elixir of life. In this way, anthroposophy not only provides us with knowledge, but we receive forces that help us in our ordinary lives during physical existence as well as in the total life that we spend during physical existence and the non-physical existence between death and a new birth. The more we experience anthroposophy as bringing to us strength, support and life renewing energies, the more do we understand it.

Upon hearing this, some may ask, "If anthroposophy is to bring us a strengthening of life, why do we have to acquire so much of what appears to be theoretical knowledge? Why are we virtually pestered at our branch meetings with descriptions about the preceding planetary evolutions of our earth? Why do we have to learn about things that took place long ago? Why do we have to acquaint ourselves with the intimate and subtle laws of reincarnation, karma and so on?"

Some people may believe that they are being offered just another science. This problem, which forces itself upon us, demands that we eliminate all easy and simplistic approaches toward answering it. We must carefully ask ourselves whether, in raising this question, we are not introducing into it some of the easy-going ways of life that become manifest when we are reluctant to learn and to acquire something in a

spiritual way. This is an uncomfortable experience for us and we are forced to wonder whether something of this attitude of discomfort does not find expression in the question that is being asked. As it is, we are led to believe that the highest goal that anthroposophy may offer us can be attained on easier roads than on that taken by us through our own literature.

It is often said, almost nonchalantly, that man has only to know himself, that all he has to do in order to be an anthroposophist is to be good. Yes, it is profound wisdom to know that to be a good person is one of the most difficult tasks, and that nothing in life demands more in the way of preparation than the realization of this ideal to be good. The problem of self-knowledge, however, cannot be solved with a quick answer, as many are inclined to believe. Therefore, today, we will shed light on some of these questions that have been raised. We then will come to see how anthroposophy meets us, even if only by appearance, as a teaching or as a science, but that it also offers in an eminent sense a path toward self-knowledge and what may be called the pilgrimage toward becoming a good person. To accomplish this we must consider from different points of view how anthroposophy can be fruitful in life.

Let us take a specific question that does not concern scientific research, but everyday life — a question known to all of us. How can we find comfort in life when we have to suffer in one way or another, when we fail to find satisfaction in life? In other words, let us ask ourselves how anthroposophy can offer comfort and consolation when it is really needed. Obviously, what can be said here only in general terms must always be applied to one's own individual case. If one lectures to many people, one can only speak in generalities.

Why do we need comfort, consolation in life? Because we may be sad about a number of events, or because we suffer as a result of pains that afflict us. It is natural that, at first, man reacts to pain as though he is rebelling inwardly against it. He wonders why he has to stand pain. "Why am I afflicted by this pain? Why is life not arranged for me in such a way that I don't suffer pain, that I am content?" These questions can only be answered satisfactorily on the basis of true knowledge concerning the nature of human karma, of human destiny. Why do we suffer in the world? We refer here to outer as well as to inner sufferings that arise in our psychic organization and leave us unfulfilled. Why are we met by such experiences that leave us unsatisfied?

In pursuing the laws of karma, we shall discover that the underlying reasons for suffering are similar to what can be described by the following example relating to the ordinary life between birth and death. Let us assume that a youngster has lived until his eighteenth year at the expense of his father. Then the father loses all his wealth and goes into bankruptcy. The young man must now learn something worthwhile and make an effort to support himself. As a result, life hits him with pain and privation. It is quite understandable that he does not react sympathetically to the pain that he has to go through.

Let us now turn to the period when he has reached the age of fifty. Since, by the necessity of events, he had to educate himself at an early age, he has become a decent person. He has found a real foothold in life. He realizes why he reacted negatively to pain and suffering when it first hit him, but now he must think differently about it. He must say to himself that the suffering would not have come to him if he had already acquired a sense of maturity — at least, to the limited degree that an eighteen year old can attain one. If he had not been afflicted by pain, he would have remained a good-for-nothing. It was the pain that transformed his shortcomings into positive abilities. He must owe it to the pain that he has become a different man in the course of forty years. What was really brought together at that time? His shortcomings and his pain were brought together. His shortcomings actually sought pain in order that his immaturity might be removed by being transformed into maturity.

Even a simple consideration of life between birth and death can lead to this view. If we look at the totality of life, however, and if we face our karma as it has been explained in the lecture two days ago, we will come to the conclusion that all pain that hits us, that all suffering that comes our way, are of such a nature that they are being sought by our shortcomings. By far the greater part of our pain and suffering is sought by imperfections that we have brought over from previous incarnations. Since we have these imperfections within ourselves, there is a wiser man in us than we ourselves are who chooses the road to pain and suffering. It is, indeed, one of the golden rules of life that we all carry in us a wiser man than we ourselves are, a much wiser man. The one to whom we say, "I," in ordinary life is less wise. If it was left to this less wise person in us to make a choice between pain and joy, he would undoubtedly choose the road toward joy. But the wiser man is the one who reigns in the depth of our unconscious and who remains inaccessible to ordinary consciousness. He directs our gaze away from easy enjoyment and kindles in us a magic power that seeks the road of pain without our really knowing it. But what is meant by

the words: Without really knowing it? They mean that the wiser man in us prevails over the less wise one. He always acts in such a way that our shortcomings are guided to our pains and he makes us suffer because with every inner and outer suffering we eliminate one of our faults and become transformed into something better.

Little is accomplished if one tries to understand these words theoretically. Much more can be gained when one creates sacred moments in life during which one is willing to use all one's energy in an effort to fill one's soul with the living content of such words. Ordinary life, with all its work, pressure, commotion and duties provides little chance to do so. In this setting, it is not always possible to silence the less wise man in us. But when we create a sacred moment in life, short as it may be, then we can say, "I will put aside the transitory effects of life; I will view my sufferings in such a way that I feel how the wise man in me has been attracted by them with a magic power. I realize that I have imposed upon myself certain experiences of pain without which I would not have overcome some of my shortcomings." A feeling of blissful wisdom will overcome us that makes us feel that even if the world appears to be filled with suffering, it is, nevertheless, radiating pure wisdom. Such an attitude is one of the fruits of anthroposophy for the benefit of life. What has been said may, of course, be forgotten, but if we do not forget it, but practice such thoughts regularly, we will become aware of the fact that we have planted a seed in our soul. What we used to experience as feelings of sadness and attitudes of depression will be transformed into positive attitudes toward life, into strength and energy. Out of these sacred moments in life will be born more harmonious souls and stronger personalities.

We may now move on to another step in our experience. The anthroposophist should be determined to take this other step only after he has comforted himself many times with regard to his sufferings in the way just described. The experience that may now be added consists of looking at one's joys and at everything that has occurred in life in the way of happiness. He who can face destiny without bias and as though he had himself wanted his sufferings, will find himself confronted by a strange reaction when he looks at his joy and happiness. He cannot face them in the same way that he faced his sufferings. It is easy to see how one can find comfort in suffering. He who does not believe this only has to expose himself to the experience.

It is difficult, however, to come to terms with joy and happiness. Much as we may accept the attitude that we have wanted our suffering, when we apply the same attitude to joy and happiness, we cannot but feel ashamed of ourselves. A deep feeling of shame will be experienced. The only way to overcome this feeling is to realize that we were not the ones who gave ourselves our joys and happiness through the law of karma. This is the only cure as, otherwise, the feeling of shame can become so intense that it virtually destroys us in our souls. Relief can only be found by not making the wiser man in us responsible for having driven us toward our joys. With this thought, one will feel that one hits the truth, because the feeling of shame will disappear. It is a fact that our joy and happiness come to us in life as something that is bestowed upon us, without our participation, by a wise divine guidance, as something we must accept as grace, as something that is to unite us with the universe. Happiness and joy shall have such an effect upon us in the sacred moments in our lives and in our intimate hours of introspection that we shall experience them as grace, as grace from the divine powers of the world who want to receive us and who, as it were, embed us in their being.

While our pain and suffering lead us to ourselves and make us more genuinely ourselves, we develop through joy and happiness, provided that we consider them as grace, a feeling that one can only describe as being blissfully embedded in the divine forces and powers of the world. Here the only justified attitude toward happiness and joy is one of gratitude. Nobody will understand joy and happiness in the intimate hours of self-knowledge when he ascribes them to his karma. If he involves karma, he commits an error that is liable to weaken and paralyze the spiritual in him. Every thought to the effect that joy and happiness are deserved actually weakens and paralyzes us. This may be a hard fact to understand because everyone who admits that his pain is inflicted upon himself by his own individuality would obviously expect to be his own master also with regard to joy and happiness. But a simple look at life can teach us that joy and happiness have an extinguishing power. Nowhere is this extinguishing effect of joy and happiness better described than in Goethe's *Faust* in the words, "And thus I stagger from desire to pleasure. And in pleasure I am parched with desire." Simple reflection upon the influence of personal enjoyment shows that inherent in it is something that makes us stagger and blots out our true being.

No sermon is here being delivered against enjoyment, nor is an invitation extended to practice self-torture, or to pinch ourselves with red hot pliers, or the like. If one recognizes a situation in the right way, it does not mean

that one should escape from it. No escape, therefore, is suggested, but a silent acceptance of joy and happiness whenever they appear. We must develop the inner attitude that we experience them as grace, and the more the better. Thus do we immerse ourselves the more in the divine. Therefore, these words are said not in order to preach asceticism, but in order to awaken the right mood toward joy and happiness.

If it is thought that joy and happiness have a paralyzing and extinguishing effect, and that therefore man should flee from them, then one would promote the ideal of false asceticism and self-torture. In this event, man, in reality, would be escaping from the grace that is given to him by the gods. Self-torture practiced by ascetics, monks and nuns is nothing but a continuous rebellion against the gods. It behooves us to feel pain as something that comes to us through our karma. In joy and happiness, we can feel that the divine is descending to us.

May joy and happiness be for us a sign as to how close the gods have attracted us, and may our pain and suffering be a sign as to how far removed we are from what we are to become as good human beings. This is the fundamental attitude toward karma without which we cannot really move ahead in life. In what the world bestows upon us as goodness and beauty, we must conceive the world powers of which it is said in the Bible, "And he looked at the world and he saw that it was good." But inasmuch as we experience pain and suffering, we must recognize what man has made of the world during its evolution, which originally was a good world, and what he must contribute toward its betterment by educating himself to bear pain with purpose and energy.

What has now been described are two ways to confront karma. To a certain extent, our karma consists of suffering and joys. We relate ourselves to our karma with the right attitude when we can consider it as something we really wanted and when we can confront our sufferings and joys with the proper understanding. But a review of karma can be extended further, which we shall do today and tomorrow.

Karma not only shows us what is related to our lives in a joyful and painful manner. But as the result of the working of karma, we meet many people during the course of our lives with whom we only become slightly acquainted, and people with whom we are connected in various ways during long periods of our lives as relatives and friends. We meet people who either cause us pain directly, or as a result of some joint undertaking that runs into obstructions. We meet people who are helpful, or to whom

we can be helpful. In short, many relationships are possible. If the effects of karma, as described the day before yesterday, are to become fruitful, then we must accept the fact that the wiser man in us wants certain experiences. He seeks a person who seems accidentally to cross our paths. He is the one who leads us to other people with whom we get engaged in this or that way. What is really guiding this wiser man in us when he wants to meet this or that person? What is he basing himself on? In answer, we have to say to ourselves that we want to meet him because we have met him previously. It may not have happened in the last life; it could have happened much earlier. The wiser man in us leads us to this person because we had dealings with him in a previous life, or because we may have incurred a debt in one way or another. We are led to this person as though by magic.

We are now reaching a manifold and intricate realm that can be covered only by generalities. The indications here stem from clairvoyant investigation. They can be useful to anybody since they can be applied to many special situations.

A strange observation can be made. We all have experienced or observed how, toward the middle of our lives, the ascending growth-line gradually tilts over to become a descending line, and our youthful energies begin to decline. We move past a climax and from there on we move downward. This point of change is somewhere in our thirties. It is also the time in our lives when we are living most intensively on the physical plane. In this connection, we can fall prey to a delusion. The events that from childhood precede this climax were brought with us into this incarnation. They were, so to speak, drawn out of a previous existence. The forces that we have brought along with us from the spiritual world are now placed outside ourselves and used to fashion our lives. These forces are used up when we reach this middle point.

In considering the descending curve of our lives, we perceive the lessons that we have learned in the school of life, that we have accumulated and have worked over. They will be taken along into the next incarnation. This is something we carry into the spiritual world; previously, we took something out of it. This is the time when we are fully engaged on the physical plane. We are thoroughly enmeshed with everything that comes to us from the outside world. We have passed our training period; we are fully committed to life and we have to come to terms with it. We are involved with ourselves, but we are primarily occupied with arranging our environments for ourselves, and in finding a proper relationship to the

world in which we live. The human capacities that are seeking a relationship to the world are our power of reasoning and that part of our volitional life that is controlled by reason. What is thus active in us is alien to the spiritual world, which withdraws from us and closes up. It is true that in the middle of our lives we are the farthest removed from the reality of the spirit.

Here occult investigation reveals a significant fact. The people with whom we meet, and the acquaintances we make in the middle period of our lives are curiously enough the very people with whom we were engaged during the period of early childhood in one of our previous incarnations. It is an established fact that, as a general rule, although not always, we meet in the middle period of our lives, as a result of karmic guidance, the very people who were once our parents. It is unlikely that we meet in early childhood the persons who were once our parents. This happens during the middle of life. This may appear as a strange fact, but this is the way it is. When we attempt to apply such rules to the experience of life, and when we direct our thoughts accordingly, then we can learn a great deal. When a person at about the age of thirty establishes a relationship to another, either through the bonds of love or of friendship, or when they get involved in conflict, or in any other experience, we will understand a great deal more about these relationships if we consider hypothetically that the person may have once been related to the other as a child is to his parents.

In reversing this relationship, we discover another remarkable fact. The very people with whom we have been associated in our early childhood, such as parents, sisters and brothers, playmates and other companions, as a rule are the very people whom we have met in the previous or one of our previous incarnations around our thirtieth year. These people frequently appear as our parents, sisters or brothers in the present incarnation.

Curious as this may appear to us at first, let us try to apply it to life. The experience of life becomes enlightened if we look at it in this way. We may, of course, err in our speculation. But if, in solitary hours, we look at life so that it is filled with meaning, we can gain a great deal. Obviously, we must not arrange karma to our liking; we must not choose the people we like and assume that they may have been our parents. Prejudices must not falsify the real facts. You realize the danger that we are exposed to and the many misconceptions that may creep in. We must educate ourselves to remain open-minded and unbiased.

You may now ask what the relation is to the people we meet during the declining curve of our lives. We have discovered that at the beginning of our lives, we meet people with whom we were acquainted during the middle period of a previous life, while now during the middle of our lives, we recognize those with whom we were involved at the beginning of previous existences. But how about the period of our descending life? The answer is that we may be led to people with whom we were involved in a previous life, or we may not yet have been involved with them. They will have been connected with us in a previous life if we are meeting under special circumstances that occur at decisive junctures of a life span, when, for example, a bitter disappointment confronts us with a serious probation. In such a situation, it is likely that we are meeting during the second period of our lives people with whom we were previously connected. Thereby conditions are dislodged and experiences that were caused in the past can be resolved.

Karma works in many ways and one cannot force it into definite patterns. But as a general rule, it can be stated that during the second half of our lives we encounter people with whom the karmic connections that are beginning to be woven cannot be resolved in one life. Let us assume that we have caused suffering to someone in a previous life. It is easy to assume that the wiser man in us will lead us back to this person in a subsequent life in order that we may equalize the harm that we have done. But life conditions cannot always permit that we can equalize everything, but perhaps only a part of it. Thereby matters are complicated, and it becomes possible that such a remainder of karma may be corrected in the second half of life. Looking at it this way, we are placing our connections and communications with other people in the light of this karma.

But there is something else that we can consider in the course of karma. This is what I have called in my two recent public lectures the process of maturing and the acquisition of life experiences. These terms may be used with utter modesty. We may take into account the process by which we become wiser. Our errors may render us wiser and it is really best for us when this happens because during one lifetime we do not often have the opportunity to practice wisdom. For this reason, we retain the lessons that we have learned from our errors as strength for a future life. But what really is this wisdom and the life experience that we can acquire?

Yesterday I referred to the fact that our ideas cannot be taken immediately from one life to another. I pointed to the fact that even a genius like Plato could not carry the ideas of his mind into a new

incarnation. We carry with us our volitional and soul powers, but our ideas are given us anew in every life, just as is the faculty of speech. The greater part of our ideas live in speech. Most of our ideas are derived from our faculty to express ourselves in a language. The ideas we conceive during the time between birth and death are always related to this particular earthly existence. This being so, it is true that our ideas will always depend on the where and how of our incarnations, no matter how many we have to live through. Our wealth of ideas is always derived from the outer world, and depends on the way karma has placed us into race, family and speech relationships.

In our ideas and concepts we really know nothing of the world except what is dependent on karma. A great deal is said with this statement. This means that everything we can know in life and acquire in the form of knowledge is something quite personal. We never can transcend the personal level with regard to everything we may acquire in life. We never come quite as far as the wiser man in us, but we always remain with the less wise man. If someone believes that he can, by himself, know more about his higher self from observations in the outer world, he is being led by his laziness into an unreal world. Thereby we are saying nothing less than that we know nothing of our higher self as a result of what we acquire in life.

How can we gain an understanding of our higher self; how do we come to such knowledge? To find an answer, we must ask ourselves the simple question, "What do we really know?" First of all, we know what we have learned from experience. We know this and nothing else. Anyone who wants to know himself and does not realize that he carries in his soul nothing but a mirror of the outer world may delude himself into believing that he can find his higher self by introspection. What he finds within, however, is nothing else than what has come in from outside. Laziness of thinking has no place in this quest. So we must inquire about the other worlds into which our higher self is embedded, and thereby we learn about the various incarnations of the earth and the world picture described by spiritual science.

Just as we try to understand a child's soul with regard to its outer life conditions by examining the child's surroundings, so must we ask what the environment of the higher self is. Spiritual science gives us insight into the worlds in which our higher self lives by its accounts of the evolution of Saturn and all its secrets, of the Moon and Earth evolution, of reincarnation and karma, of devachan and kamaloka, and so on. This is the only way we

can learn about our higher self, about that self that extends beyond the physical plane. He who refuses to accept these secrets is as playful as a little kitten in regard to himself. It is not by petting and caressing oneself that one can discover the divine man in oneself. Only what is experienced in the outer world is stored inside, but the divine man in us can only be found when we search in our soul for the mirrored world beyond the physical.

The very things that are uncomfortable to learn make up knowledge of self. In reality, true anthroposophy is true knowledge of self. Properly received, the science of the spirit enlightens us about our own self. Where is this self? Is it within our skin? No, it is poured into the entire world, and what is in the world is linked to the self; also, what once was in the world is connected with this self. Only if we get to know the world can we also get to know the self.

Anthroposophical knowledge, although it may appear first as mere theory, points to nothing less than a path to self-knowledge. He who wants to find himself by staring into his inner being may be motivated by the noble desire to be good and unselfish. But in reality, he becomes more and more selfish. In contrast to this, the struggle with the great secrets of existence, the attempt to emancipate oneself from the complacent personal self, the acceptance of the reality of the higher worlds and the knowledge that can be obtained from them, all lead to true self-knowledge.

While contemplating Saturn, Sun and Moon, we lose ourselves in cosmic thoughts. Thus, a soul thinking in anthroposophy exclaims, "In thy thinking cosmic thoughts are living." He then adds to these words, "Lose thyself in cosmic thoughts."

A soul creating out of anthroposophy says, "In thy feeling cosmic forces are weaving," and adds in the same breath, "Feel thyself through cosmic forces." These universal powers will not reveal themselves when we expect them to be flattering or when we close our eyes and pledge to be a good human being. Only when we open our spiritual eye and perceive how "cosmic forces" work and create, and when we realize that we are embedded in these forces, will we have an experience of our own self.

Thus, a soul that draws strength from anthroposophy will say, "In thy willing cosmic beings are working," and he will quickly add, "Create thyself through beings of will."

The meaning of these words can be realized if self-knowledge is practiced in the right way. If this is done, one recreates oneself out of the cosmic forces.

These thoughts may appear to be dry and abstract, but they are not mere theory. They have the inherent power of a seed planted in the earth. It sprouts and grows; life shoots in all directions and the plant becomes a tree. Thus it is with the experiences we receive through the science of the spirit that we become capable of transforming ourselves. "Create thyself through beings of will." Thus, anthroposophy becomes an elixir of life. Our view of spirit worlds opens up, we draw strength from these worlds and once we can fully absorb them, they will help us to know ourselves in all our depth. Only when we imbue ourselves with world knowledge can we take hold of ourselves and gradually move from the less wise man in us, who is split off by the guardian of the threshold, to the wise man in us. This, which remains hidden to the weak, can be gained by the strong through anthroposophy.

*In thy thinking cosmic thoughts are living;
Lose thyself in cosmic thoughts.
In thy feeling cosmic forces are weaving;
Feel thyself through cosmic forces.
In thy willing cosmic beings are working;
Create thyself through beings of will.*

7

Karma or Destiny

We are living in the fifth post-Atlantean age, and in this age men will add the great teachings of karma to the other teachings

Source: [Free Man Creator](#)

Lecture coverage and references

[1906-08-29-GA095](#)

How are karmic compensations accomplished?

If someone has done something to another person, there will have to be a karmic adjustment between them, which means that the persons concerned must be born again as contemporaries. How does this happen? What are the forces that bring the two persons together?

The way it works out is as follows:

- *A wrong has been done; the victim has suffered it;*
- *the person who did it passes into kamaloka, but first he has to witness the occurrence in the retrospective tableau of his past life. The injury he has inflicted does not then cause him pain, but **in kamaloka**, as he relives his life backwards, **the event comes before him, and now he has to suffer the pain he caused. He has to feel it in and through the very self of his victim. This experience imprints itself like a seal on his astral body.** He takes with him a portion of the pain, and **a definite force remains in him** as the outcome of what he has experienced in the other Man's being.*

- *In this way **any pain or pleasure he has to live through turns into a force, and he carries a great number of such forces with him into the spirit world.***

When he returns to a new incarnation, this is the force that draws together all the persons who have had experiences in common. During the kamaloka period they lived within one another, and they incorporated these forces into themselves. Hence within one physical human being there may be three or even more "Kamaloka men", in order that the situation involving them may be lived out.

An example known to occult science will make this clear.

A man was condemned to death by five judges. What was really happening there? In a previous life the man had killed these other five men and karmic forces had brought all six together for a karmic adjustment. This does not produce a never-ending karmic chain; other relationships come in to change the further course of events.

Spiritual forces, you see, are thus secretly at work to bring about the complicated patterns of human living.

1909-01-26-GA107

lecture titled 'illness and karma'

1909-03-22-GA107

*How did those spiritual Beings who desire to further man's progress act in order to combat this corruption, error and illusion arising from the material world? They saw to it — the process was of course slow and very gradual — that man was actually lifted away from the material world as such; this enabled him to shoulder and work out his **karma**. Whereas, therefore, the beings upon whom it fell to rectify the enticement of the Luciferic beings brought into the world **suffering, pain** and what is connected with them, namely **death**, the beings whose task it was to rectify*

the outcome of error concerning the sense-world, made it possible for man, through his karma, eventually to blot out all the error, all the evil he has wrought in the world.

For what would have happened if he had become the prey of evil and error?

Little by little he would have become one with the evil; no progress would have been possible for him. For with every error, every lie, every illusion, we cast an obstacle in the way of progress. We should fall back in our progress to exactly the same extent to which we had cast obstacles in our path through sin and error, if we were not in a position to rectify them; in other words, we could not reach man's true goal. It would be impossible to attain this goal if the counter-forces, the forces of karma, were not in operation.

*Suppose that in some life you commit a wrong. If this wrong were to become firmly fixed in your life it would mean nothing less than that you would lose the step forward which you would have taken had you not committed the wrong; with every wrong, a step would be lost — enough steps to correspond exactly with the wrongs committed. If the possibility of surmounting error had not been given, man must ultimately have been submerged by it. But **the blessing of karma** was bestowed.*

What does this blessing mean for man? Is karma something at which to shudder, something to dread?

No, indeed! Karma is a power for which man should be thankful. For karma says to us: If you have committed a wrong, remember that "God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap". An error demands that you shall right it; then, having expunged it from your karma you can again take a step forward!

***Without karma, no progress would be possible.** Karma is a blessing that has been vouchsafed to us, inasmuch as it obliges us to rectify every error, to re-achieve the steps that thrust us back.*

***Karma was thus the indirect consequence of the deeds of Ahriman.** And now let us go further. In our days we are moving towards the epoch when other beings will draw near to man —*

beings who in the future before us will intrude more and more deeply into human evolution. Just as the Luciferic spirits intervened in the Lemurian and the Ahrimanic spirits in the Atlantean epoch, so our epoch too will see the intrusion of beings. Let us be clear about the nature of these beings.

1911-12-31-GA134

the quote below contains the essential paragraph, but requires what preceded hence pre-read full lecture link

But now what happens to all that we let radiate out of us in this way?

All that rays forth from us in this way, my dear friends — take it altogether and you have, in very deed and truth, the whole influence that is exerted by us on the world. For whatever you do, when you do it, you move, you bring your system of bones and muscles into movement. Not only so, but even when you only lie and think you are still raying forth from you substance that is perceptible to Intuition.

In short, whatever activity you engage in you are sending out this spiritual substance into the world, it is perpetually passing over from you into the world.

Now the fact is, if these processes were not taking place there would be nothing left of our earth when it came to the end of its evolution, nothing left of it but pulverised matter which would pass over like dust into universal space. But something is saved through man from the material process of the earth and lives in the general cosmos, in the universe; and it is what can arise through Inspiration, Intuition and Imagination. In this way man gives to the world that wherefrom the world builds itself up anew. Man, as it were, provides the building-stones. This it is that will continue to live as the soul and spirit of the whole earth when this earth's material substance is rent and shattered like a corpse; even as the individual soul and spirit nature of man lives on when man has passed through the gate of death. Man bears his individual soul through the gate of death; the earth bears over

into the Jupiter-existence what has come of the Imaginations and Inspirations and Intuitions of man. There you have the great difference that exists between the two men in man. The man who perceives with his senses, who secretes in his glands, who digests and who nourishes himself — that is the man who is destined for what is cast off, he is of time and passes away. But that which is the result of the presence of nerves and muscle and bone — that is incorporated into the earth, in order that the earth may thereby continue to exist.

*And now we come to something which stands like a **great mystery** in our whole existence, and which, because **it is in very truth a mystery, cannot be grasped by the intellect; rather is it for the soul to believe it and penetrate to its depths. It is, none the less, perfectly true.***

That which man lets stream out from him into his environment divides itself quite distinctly into two parts.

- *There is, firstly, that part of the Inspiration, Intuition and Imagination upon which general cosmic existence, so to say, depends, the cosmos receives it, and drinks it in.*
- *But there is another part which cosmic existence does not receive but, on the contrary, rejects.*

Cosmic existence makes its attitude quite clear, as much as to say:

- *"These Inspirations and Intuitions and Imaginations I can use, I absorb them in order that I may carry them over to the Future Jupiter existence."*
- *But others, cosmic existence rejects, it refuses to receive them; and the result is these other Intuitions, Inspirations and Imaginations, being nowhere received, remain as such for themselves; they remain — spiritually — in the cosmos, they cannot be disintegrated.*

*Thus, **what we ray forth from us falls into two parts, that which is gladly received by the cosmos and that which the cosmos rejects.** The cosmos is not pleased with the latter and*

leaves it alone. It remains where it is.

How long does it remain?

It remains there until such time as the human being comes and himself destroys it by means of outstreamings, which are of a kind able to destroy it; and as a general rule no other man has the power to destroy outstreamings that are rejected by the cosmos than the one who himself sent them out. Here you have something of the technique of karma, here you have the reason why we must ourselves meet again in the course of our karma all those Imaginations, Inspirations and Intuitions which have been rejected by the cosmos. For we must ourselves destroy them and annihilate them; the cosmos receives only what is correct and right in thought, what is beautiful in feeling and what is morally good and sound. Everything else it rejects.

That is the secret, that is the great mystery.

And whatever is false in thought, whatever is ugly in feeling and whatever is morally evil — a man must himself erase from existence if it is to be no longer there; and he must do so through the necessary thoughts and feelings or will impulses or deeds. It will follow him all the time until he has erased it. And so you see it is not true to say that the cosmos consists only of neutral laws of nature or expresses itself only in neutral laws of nature. The cosmos that is all around us — of which we believe we can perceive with our senses and grasp with our intellect, has quite other forces in it as well. If we may put it in this way, the cosmos vigorously repels and repudiates the evil, the ugly and the false and is eager to receive into itself the good, the beautiful and the true. It is not merely at stated times that the powers of the cosmos sit in judgment, but this sitting in judgment is something that goes on throughout the whole of earth evolution.

1912-04-17-GA143

We are living in the fifth post-Atlantean age, and in this age men will add the great teachings of karma to the other teachings, they will learn to understand their karma.

...

They will learn to grasp the idea:

"I am placed on earth through birth; my destiny is on earth; I experience joy and sorrow; I must understand that what I experience as joy and sorrow does not approach me in vain, that it is my Karma, and that it comes to me because it is my Karma, my great educator. I look upon that which was before my birth, which placed me in this incarnation, because this, my destiny, is necessary for my further development."

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