

The Lectures of Rudolf Steiner

Spiritual Knowledge: A Way of Life

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The road that leads to a knowledge [cognition] and understanding of the spiritual world differs in many respects from the method of knowledge [cognition] that meets with general acceptance to-day.

As I have explained on other occasions, not only is it possible in our time to travel on this road, but there is in the man of the present day a deep need — yes, a hunger — for knowledge of the super-sensible. Certain preparatory inner experiences are, as you know, required in order to awaken in man the hitherto slumbering: consciousness of the spiritual world and of the eternal in his own being. Man cannot, therefore, follow this path of knowledge without its affecting him in his innermost soul. Here we have at once a radical difference from the way of cognition to which we are accustomed.

Consider for a moment the scientific knowledge we acquire to-day by the activity of the intellect — and all present-day knowledge is so acquired, whether it be based on observation or on experiment. *Where*, to begin with, is this knowledge? For the most part, in books, in writing. The path of knowledge is in consequence well-defined, and man has continually to accept — and is often glad to accept — the limits marked out for recognised knowledge. How readily, when entering into some question of practical life, a man will defer to books — or shall we say, for it sounds a little better, will seek the requisite knowledge along purely scientific lines! This knowledge once acquired, he is, of course, ready to be himself — to be man — again. He has no wish to remain, *in life*, in the mood that accepts without question, maintaining even with a certain pride: it has been scientifically proved. ... When anyone brings forward something he has discovered out of his own experience, it will frequently happen that one who is *au fait* in scientific matters will immediately reply: But that does not tally with what is already known and proved, with what has been established as scientific fact. Knowledge has become severed from direct personal experience, so much so indeed that it is regarded as genuine only if acquired and experienced quite apart from any relation to what springs from the heart of man.

The path of knowledge which leads to a recognition of the spiritual world and of the eternal in the human being has quite another character. It calls upon the personal in man; he cannot so much as take one step upon it without heart and soul being directly concerned. And I want to-day to speak of the results for the life of man when knowledge is in this way brought into immediate connection with the personal in the human being.

Knowledge of the spiritual world is not just a continuation or extension of the knowledge that prevails to-day; rather does it imply a change in the whole way of experiencing knowledge.

Let us look a little more closely at a distinctive feature of the knowledge that has made such advances in our day and generation. Do not think I want to criticise this method of knowledge. It has achieved a very great deal on its own ground, and has brought to humanity quite remarkable blessings of a material kind, although it must be admitted that these are, in the present age of

civilisation, somewhat heavily cancelled out! Present-day knowledge has, throughout, this characteristic: it starts from the assumption that things are either "true" or "untrue", and sets out to decide between the alternatives by the exercise of the intellect. We make a point, do we not, of being logical and of basing our conclusion on the facts of experience. Once we have come to see that some scientific statement is true or untrue, then it stands there before us in its truth or untruth and our personality has very little concern with it. We can of course — and should — be filled with enthusiasm for the truth, and turn with loathing from error and falsehood; but if we compare our personal relation to the scientific findings of our time as regards their truth and falsehood with other relations of life, we find a considerable difference.

Let me take a simple, practical example. When we satisfy our hunger, we are doing something in which we are ourselves personally involved; the satisfied hunger cannot be said to stand before us as something objective to ourselves. Whereas when we come to a conclusion between truth and untruth in the realm of science we seek rather to keep our personality out of the decision. If yesterday we were in error on a certain matter, and to-day are no longer so, the implication is, we have arrived at a conclusion, but in doing so we have not essentially changed in our personal being. If, on the other hand, we have eaten something we never tasted before, and have enjoyed it, then we are not quite the same as we were.

Now it will be found that the concepts "true" and "untrue", "true" and "false" become changed when we begin to have immediate experience of the truths of spiritual science. As we gradually find our way on this new path of knowledge, we stop saying: This is true, that is false. The criterion holds good for the material world; there we can rightly let it be our guide. Few people, however, are aware of its origin. If we trace back the word "true" in the various languages, we make an interesting discovery. The abstract concept, it denotes to-day is comparatively new; it is a product of evolution. In earlier times, anything to which man felt he owed acknowledgement and assent was said to be "what the Gods willed." The world was divided for man into what the Gods have willed and what the Gods have not willed. In many languages the word "true" still retains this older meaning as well. "True" meant "true to the Divine Order"; the abstract meaning came later. When the intellect took command in the field of knowledge, men forgot the origin of the word "true". And so to-day we have this completely impersonal relation to knowledge.

The new way of knowledge, however, leads us again to associate something actual and vital with what we assent to or reject. In spiritual science we are not content to say of something that it is true or correct; we ascribe to it a *quality*, an effectual quality. We speak of knowledge being sound, wholesome — or unwholesome, and to be discarded. The concepts "true" or "correct", and "untrue" or "incorrect", which are really valid only for the physical world, are replaced by the concepts "sound" and "unsound". We are thereby obliged to come into a nearer, more personal relation with the whole of knowledge. For we must needs regard as desirable what is sound and wholesome, we incline to it; on the other hand, we turn away from, we reject, so far as we are able, what is unsound or unhealthy. And as we begin to discern in the field of knowledge whether ideas enrich life or impoverish it, strengthen and aid life, or render it sick and feeble, we begin to realise how intimate is the connection of ideas with life. The knowledge of the present day we approach rather as we do a person to whom we are more or less indifferent, with whom we have merely a conventional relation. Not so with the Spiritual Science I am representing here. We approach it in the way we would a friend whom we love.

As we come to apprehend the truths of the pre-earthly life of man — the life he had as a being of soul and spirit in a purely spiritual world — or as we take our way into the realms of the spiritual world through which man lives between death and new birth, we begin to feel deeply connected with these worlds and with all that they contain; we feel impelled to unite our very being with what we

recognise as sound and healthy knowledge, giving us a sound, healthy outlook on life, while on the other hand we naturally reject and cast behind us views that we cannot help seeing are unhealthy, unsound.

Let me illustrate my point by comparison once again with a familiar everyday experience. Normally, man takes nourishment, and this, when it has undergone change inside him, enables him to replace what he has used up in his body; and in this metamorphosis of the means of nourishment man has a feeling of well-being. Conditions, however, may arise, owing to which he is unable to take food — perhaps because his organism is not in a state to digest it, or for some other reason. When this is so, man feeds on what is in his own body; he begins, so to say, to devour himself. Certain illnesses are associated with this condition. This is not unlike what happens with us in the pursuit of knowledge. As we gradually acquire knowledge of the spiritual world, we come to feel how, through such knowledge, we are being brought together with the spiritual world, we are becoming one with it; we are finding our way to the Gods, and to our own immortal soul, finding our way to what we shall experience in the spiritual world when we have passed through the gate of death, and to what we experienced there before we came down to earth. It is almost as though we had offered up our own existence, surrendered it in devotion to the world; but that thereby our life had become richer, inwardly richer. We have become the world, and in so doing we begin to apprehend ourselves for the first time in our full human inwardness. We discover that the whole being and existence of man depends on his coming together with the world in this way. Similarly, too, we learn to understand how the lack or neglect of such truths is like having to live in the world without the organs for receiving nourishment, driven to feed on our own body.

It is different on the intellectual plane. Here we can dispute and argue about idealism and materialism, and so forth; to one we may feel kindly disposed — to another perhaps not, but we do not suffer on that account; none of them affects us deeply. But when we have learned to apprehend sound spiritual truths, then ideas that have a materialistic orientation give us pain; for we know, such truths leave man to feed upon himself.

Now we shall find that the experience I have described enables us to distinguish spiritual truths in yet another way, for it brings home to us that truth is related to love, that healthy and sound knowledge is related to selflessness in man — not the selflessness that loses the self but that leads rather to the possession of the self in the true sense. When man has learned to go out of himself and into the world, becoming in this way not empty but filled with world content, then it is that he finds his true manhood.

Devotion, loving devotion to the spiritual facts of life, becomes a characteristic of one who is able to receive spiritual knowledge. We do not, as a rule, find that the pursuit of purely intellectual knowledge has any specific effect on character; but when a man has probed to the heart of spiritual knowledge, he knows that he cannot apprehend such knowledge without its affecting his character, without its entering — to speak in a paradox — into the flesh and blood of his soul, developing in him an inclination to selflessness, to love. He comes also to understand that when man receives knowledge that lacks this health-giving impulse, it drives him — spiritually speaking — to feed on himself, and from this he can learn the true nature of egoism.

The effect upon character is one of the most important results that can accrue from spiritual knowledge. Abstract intellectual knowledge is like an artificial root; it has been constructed by the intellect — no plant can grow from it. This is true of all the scientific knowledge that men respect and revere to-day, useful though it be, and by no means to be disparaged. From a real root grows a real plant; and from a real knowledge, whereby man can unite his spirit with the Spirits of the World, grows little by little the complete man who knows what true selflessness — selfless love — is, and

what egoism is, and from this understanding derives impulses to act and work in life — the impulse, where it is right, to be selfless; or again, where he perhaps has need to draw forth something from his own being in preparation for life — there, openly, without any disguise, to develop egoism.

A certain clairvoyance will be found to enter into this self-observation, and into the way it is led over into deed and action. From the root of spiritual knowledge springs the plant of the higher man, the man of soul and spirit. Spiritual knowledge leads therefore quite naturally and inevitably to morality. As regards present-day knowledge, we tend to be proud of the fact that it has no connection with morality or ethics. We assume as a matter of course that we have to examine the inorganic processes in Nature in accordance with their laws, looking in them for cause and effect and not expecting to find in them any ethical working. We boast that we can even go on to apply these methods to *living* processes, to our study of the plant, of the animal and of the human being, allowing ourselves to concede the presence of a moral element only when we come to consider the deeper impulses that rise up in human hearts and souls: impulses of which, however, we cannot say that they are able to demonstrate their independent existence by accomplishing the transition to objective reality.

Knowledge of the spirit, on the other hand, leading as it does to an intensive development of the experience of selflessness, of that loving devotion to the matter in hand, without which spiritual knowledge is unattainable, and on the other hand to a fine perception of the nature of egoism, brings us right into the moral world-order. The moral world-order begins to be for us an immediate reality. Let us examine a little how this comes about.

We begin to speak no longer merely in an abstract way of a pre-earthly life of man, but actually to look into the spiritual world in which we lived before we descended to Earth, even as we look out: with our physical eyes on our physical surroundings; and we find that we are surrounded there by beings who never take on a physical body, just as here in the physical world we have around us beings who have, like ourselves, a physical body. The spiritual world and its beings become actual and objective; we begin to be familiar with them.

What is the secret of our bodily existence on earth? Even as through the years of childhood, from birth onward, we are continually being impelled, unconsciously or half consciously, to find our way into our body, to grow increasingly one with it, so do we in like manner, throughout our physical life on earth, gradually approach the world, feeling our way towards it by means of our physical organs. When we are active and creative, we — so to speak — lose ourselves in our body; soul and spirit are surrendered to the body and we lose consciousness of them. The content of the world is communicated to us through our bodily nature. Materialism is quite right as far as earthly consciousness is concerned, for we are obliged to make use of the body as long as we remain in the earthly consciousness, and so have to be content with perceiving only what is bodily. If, however, man wants to comprehend the spiritual world and his own super-sensible being, he has to undergo in himself a development wherein the body acts as a hindrance. For the body would wrench us away from the spiritual world, would alienate us from it, driving us back again and again upon ourselves and our own egoity; whereas in spiritual knowledge we have to come right out of ourselves — rather as we do when we love another human being. And in so far as we become able to do this, a deeply significant truth begins to dawn upon us, namely, that man passes through repeated earthly lives.

As a matter of fact, many of the feelings and impulses that we carry in our soul are there as a result of earlier lives on earth; only we do not observe them as such because we remain in our body. Suppose we meet someone, and the meeting leads to a friendship that alters the whole course of our life. When we look back over the earlier years, we discover with the eye of the spirit what we could never find by the aid of bodily vision alone: namely, that our whole life up to the moment of meeting

him was a search for that person. One who is already a little older and looks back in this way is able to see his life as the working out of a plan; he recognises how, when he was quite a little child, his life took a direction that was to bring about eventually the meeting with this friend. We can go further in this kind of observation of life and discover that all we do, though it may seem to result from the working of earthly physical forces, *is* in reality guided from elsewhere. We come in fact to recognise that the life we are now living is dependent on earlier lives on earth. And between these have been also lives in a spiritual world.

Now we can come to a knowledge of the other lives we have lived on earth only when we learn to imbue with love the faculty of cognition. It is by no means so easy as some people think, to discover the man we were! For he is a complete stranger to us now. Only a selfless, love-imbued faculty of cognition can grasp this other person, so that he enters into our consciousness.

This is how it is with all stages of higher, spiritual knowledge. Our knowledge has to become a loving knowledge, intimately bound up with our personality, a knowledge that simply cannot *be* at all without our personality taking part in it. And as we grow into this larger world, and learn to look beyond birth and beyond death, to look also beyond and behind the world of the senses — for in the plant, animal, and mineral kingdoms we begin to behold beings, spiritually active beings — as we do this, we come into a kingdom of reality, where the ethical impulses that inhere in our knowledge have place. I will give you an example.

Destiny, we say, is hard to bear. So little good seems often to result from actions that spring from the highest motives, whilst others that flow from evil motives reap marvelous success! How is this? The reason is that this physical world of the senses, notwithstanding that we have taken for ourselves a fragment of it to form, as it were, a garment for our souls, has in it no moral impulses. The moral and ethical impulses that are behind our actions have no place there; they are wiped away out of whatever we do or make in the physical world, the nearest approach to moral working is a purely formal compensatory effect. But this physical world is permeated throughout with *spirit*; we carry our moral or immoral actions into the world of the spirit. And here, even as we found that "true" comes to mean for us sound or healthy, we recognise that when man devotes himself to moral truth, he becomes in his inner being, strong, well developed; whereas when he gives himself up to error he becomes a cripple in soul and spirit.

In the present cycle of evolution this does not find expression in the physical body (there we carry the results of what we did and achieved in our *previous* life on earth); but when we have laid down our physical body and gone through the gate of death, then there is no longer anything to prevent our soul and spirit from assuming the physiognomy we have acquired from the ethical quality of our experience. There in the spiritual world we, as soul and spirit, are strong and well-developed, or crippled and weak. Then, later on, comes the time for us to resume a physical body; and in forming it we build, from within, our own destiny. For we may, on the one hand, be able, having brought from an earlier life a harmonious soul-and-spirit nature, to form the new body in perfect order and proportion, so that we can employ it in good and useful activity; or, coming into incarnation, as it were, as a moral cripple, we may find ourselves able only to form and guide the new body in a clumsy and awkward fashion, from embryo up to adult age. And now this inner destiny becomes our outer destiny. For it is clear to an unprejudiced observation that whatever befalls us from without is closely connected with what we ourselves have prepared as our inner destiny. In all our intercourse with the world outside, we make use of the body as an instrument, and according as we use it skillfully and well, or badly and clumsily, we occasion, at any rate in part, the events that befall us. And then, in the further lives that follow, come new compensation and balancing-out. Thus in the spiritual world we find the formative forces that belong to our moral life. The moral world becomes for us a reality.

We see how an ethical impulse cannot in one earth-life effect a change in the physical body, but when it passes over into the next life on earth, can work there quite definitely as a health-giving influence, no less truly than heat works in the physical world, or light, or electricity. That we imagine the moral world-order to be no more than a man-made abstraction is due to the fact that we take cognisance only of the physical world, tracing everything back there from effect to cause; we can, however, equally well recognise this law at work in the spiritual world; only there we have to trace the effects, as they show themselves in one life, back to causes in an earlier life on earth. In other words, we need to know the *level* on which the law of cause and effect has to be applied to human destiny.

Now all that sounds very well, someone might say, but as things are, men have not this spiritual knowledge of which you speak; only a researcher in the spirit can see into the spiritual world-others must be content with the words and ideas in which he clothes his perceptions. To this I would reply: To paint a picture, one must be an artist; but to experience the beauty and inner content of the picture one need not be an artist, one has only to approach the picture with a sincere and open mind. It is the same with spiritual knowledge. In order to "paint" in ideas, one must be a researcher in the spirit; but once the picture is painted, it stands there for others to behold. And if these, who are not themselves "artists", are free from prejudice and are sincere seekers after truth, they will receive health and healing from the descriptions of the spiritual world.

We are actually, at the present day, in a peculiar position in this respect. Spiritual Science, in the sense we understand it here, is, comparatively speaking, a new thing in our civilisation. The person who is able to represent it from immediate experience, stands alone; and all he can do is to clothe it in words and ideas, and impart these to his fellow men. It might even be thought that what he has to say concerns himself alone! In any case, that is how the position is to-day. One earnestly hopes it will soon alter, for Spiritual Science has power to quicken and awaken man inwardly. As things still are, however, mankind remains to-day a recipient only of spiritual knowledge.

For him who *acquires* spiritual knowledge, the case is very different. There comes a point where he has to undergo a pain with which no other pain can be compared. It is at the moment when he passes beyond his own spiritual experience between birth and death and launches out into the vast ocean of eternity in which we shall be when we have gone through the gate of death, and in which we were before we descended through birth to physical life on earth. An indescribable pain is involved in leaving, on the path of knowledge, the world of the physical senses, and entering the world of the spirit. The whole being is, as it were, steeped in pain. And now a remarkable thing happens. At first the higher knowledge seizes hold of the traveler in his entire being; but then, it wrests itself free of him with unbelievable force and certainty.

Since we have set out in this lecture to show where the personal has place in the path of knowledge, you will allow me, I think, to describe at this point what is, on the face of it, an entirely personal matter. As we shall find, however, what seems most personal in it has nevertheless an impersonal character. It is an experience that can befall anyone who comes into a similar situation.

To begin with, as I said, the knowledge of the spiritual takes hold of the entire human being. Ordinary intellectual knowledge is a concern of the head, the intellect. It is in the head alone that we have to exert ourselves. True, the acquisition of this kind of knowledge often obliges one to sit still for long hours at a stretch, so that one may be glad to break off for sheer weariness! It is nevertheless true to say that ordinary knowledge does not call upon the whole human being. But if we try to acquire, with the aid of the intellect alone, knowledge of the spiritual and super-sensible, it evades us like a dream; its great and far-reaching conceptions slip from our grasp. When we have, so to speak,

pressed forward to the spiritual world, when we have passed what is spoken of as the Guardian of the Threshold, we have the greatest trouble to bring to consciousness — not the content; *that* one can acquire as a matter of knowledge — but the experience.

It is a fact that very many people become able, comparatively quickly, to have experiences in the spiritual world. But presence of mind is needed to grasp these experiences. With the majority of persons it happens that before they can give their attention to some experience, it is gone again. Presence of mind is altogether indispensable for the attainment of spiritual knowledge, as you will know from my book *How to Attain Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*. When one succeeds in acquiring knowledge of things that are beyond space and beyond time, they seem like a dream, and only with the greatest difficulty can one lift them on to a higher level of consciousness. They vanish-away like a dream if one tries to grasp them with the head alone.

Now it is important for one who speaks about the spiritual world in ideas to have always the spiritual world before him as he speaks; and he can acquire the habit of standing in this way within the spiritual world only if his whole being participates in the knowledge. Everyone will find his own way of doing this. I, for example, find it necessary to fix the results of spiritual knowledge by jotting down either brief notes or symbolical drawings. I need hardly say, I mean by this nothing of a mediumistic nature, but a perfectly conscious and deliberate action. Putting down some note at once ensures that the activity is not confined to the head alone but is shared in by the whole human being. It is of no consequence whether later on one refers to these notes: the point is, to *make* them. I can assure you I have used up whole cartloads of notebooks in this way and never looked at them again. What has been seen in the spiritual world is more strongly retained when the experience is allowed to flow into an impulse of will that leads to the activity of writing; for ultimately, all depends on experiencing the truths of the spiritual world — let me say — "organically", experiencing them with one's whole being.

Initiation-knowledge of the present day has perforce another characteristic, which need not continue indefinitely and was not present in earlier and other paths to initiation. I mean the following. Suppose one has produced some spiritual knowledge, and later on has occasion to come back to it. If one is, let us say, as old as I am, and produced some 40 years ago much of what one has to communicate, then as far as the inner spiritual activity is concerned, it is almost as though one had to deal with something one was reading for the first time in an old book. Please understand me aright. Knowledge one has oneself produced many years ago becomes as strange to one as a book one has never seen before. It is not remote in the way that we feel abstract knowledge to be remote, but spiritually it severs itself from one. A man who stands outside initiation-knowledge, may feel how this knowledge, when he receives it, becomes united with his very being; but for the one who has produced it, it separates itself from him; he feels as if he had before him another human being.

Many a book, I assure you, by one or other of our friends, strikes me as more familiar than the books I wrote myself in earlier years. In fact, I read these only when I must: for instance, to revise them for a new edition. The teaching of the spiritual researcher severs itself from him and becomes objective; he is quite unable to feel any particular pleasure or satisfaction in it — as one might naturally expect in other circumstances! This has nothing to do with the knowledge as such; it arises only from the fact that one is obliged in the present day to attain the knowledge in solitude. In earlier times, when the path of initiation knowledge was far more instinctive and less conscious, it could not rightly be pursued in solitude. There were societies for the fostering of initiation knowledge. Such societies exist even in our time, but they merely carry on a tradition. If to-day one speaks from direct personal experience in knowledge, one is compelled to stand alone.

How was it arranged in societies of this kind? And how will it be in the future, when knowledge of the spiritual will be received again into civilisation and be called upon to enter once more into all the practical spheres of life? For spiritual knowledge will be able to do this, when once man begins to take hold of it. The societies of which we have spoken were ordered in the following way. An agreement was come to, freely and willingly on the part of all, that one of their number should undertake a particular field of knowledge, another, another field, and so on. One, for example, would concentrate all his powers on inquiring into the influence exercised upon the life of man by the world of stars, another on investigating the path leading from pre-earthly existence into the sphere of the earth.

This plan made it possible for the several fields of knowledge to be investigated in detail. For if it takes ten years to get to know something of the influence of the stars on human life, it takes, not ten years, but a lifetime to explore in detail even a few steps of the way from pre-earthly into earthly life. There was accordingly good reason for distributing among different persons the several realms of knowledge. Each made a deep study of the field of knowledge upon which he set himself to concentrate, and for the rest, allowed himself to take the knowledge from his companions. He had thus the double experience; he knew what it was to produce knowledge himself inwardly, and he had also the experience of receiving knowledge he had not himself produced.

When men learn to be more open-hearted and to approach knowledge with real warmth of soul, then it will afford them the same kind of experience one may have from the painting of a great artist. Man's own natural feeling for reality will enable him to take hold of what lives in the idea he has not himself produced; he will have a direct inner experience of the idea. He will undergo also the pain and suffering of which I told you — all the phases of inner personal experience that come from meeting spiritual knowledge face to face. This can be achieved by one who receives spiritual truths; he can grasp them, take hold of them with the entire forces of his soul. Such an experience is, however, in large measure denied to the spiritual researcher of the present day; he has to forgo it in so far as he produces the knowledge.

The fruits of spiritual knowledge can accrue to those who receive the truths with warmth of heart. And within the societies of earlier times provision was always made for the receiving of knowledge. When a particular field of spiritual research was allotted to one member — or the member chose it for himself — then, as far as that field was concerned, he went without the receiving which gives so much help and enrichment to life; on the other hand he experienced the blessing of receiving, in that he received knowledge from his companions who undertook other fields of research. Something, of the kind must come again in the future.

Do not think I speak out of a desire to attach importance to my own experiences; I want rather to draw your attention to the fact that in order to reap the fruits of spiritual knowledge, one does not need to have produced the knowledge oneself. Let a man follow the exercises — in meditation, concentration, etc. — described in my book, *How to Attain Knowledge of the Higher Worlds*. Then, if he succeeds in rousing himself to inner activity of soul, and takes but a few first steps towards an understanding of life, his heart will be open to receive what the spiritual researcher can give, and what he receives will unite itself with him in quite an intimate manner, for it speaks directly to the personal in him, and he will find the way, as personal man, to the deep sources of life whence the eternal in his own being is derived; he will enter into the experiences man has in the spiritual world before his life on earth, and into those also that await man when he has passed through the gate of death and come again into the spiritual world. And as he makes this knowledge his own, a second higher man will grow up within him.

On this path of knowledge we learn to feel, as it were, at home in the spiritual world in the way we feel at home in the world of nature, with its secure and stable laws. The fact that we have muscles and bones unites us with nature; our own physical nature makes us feel at home in the physical nature of the world around. And when we begin to apprehend the reality of spiritual conceptions and to see their content as part of the spiritual world, then we begin to feel at home in a divine spiritual world — even as with our body we feel at home in the world of the senses. And it is this feeling at home in the spiritual world that is so important, for thereby we attain to a knowledge of ourselves as having eternal spiritual existence in the eternal divine spiritual world.

For not only is it true that mankind in general is rooted in a spiritual world. Every single human being, just through that which is most personal in him, just through that which he, as an individual, can experience by being on earth in a particular place and at a particular time, is rooted in, and belongs to, a spiritual world which bears the stamp of eternity. As we come to realise this, we begin to feel as though a voice were calling to us: "Make not yourself a cripple in soul and spirit!" For not merely man in general, but each single human being, is relied upon to play his part.

It is also through what is most individual and personal in him that man finds his way to religion, and to all true artistic experience. Hence it is that Spiritual Science leads directly into a religious mood of life. You will find abundant evidence in our literature of how Christianity is deepened, and can stand forth in its true light and in its true being, when we try to understand the personal experiences of the Christ Who appeared in a personal form.

Attaining thus by a personal path to our own eternal being, we know how to give personality its right place and meaning in the world, conscious that each one of us is needed and reckoned upon as single personality. Knowledge of the spirit has become for us a human and personal path in life. We feel inwardly seized and quickened by the content of spiritual knowledge, in the same way that our body is seized and quickened by the power of the blood.

The meaning we have been led to discern in our personal, our individual existence, may perhaps be best conveyed in a picture. A meeting has been called, and we are summoned to attend the meeting, because it is important for just that to be said in it which we alone can contribute. Suppose we take some action which has the result of preventing our being present. We are not there; we — who are expected, who are looked for — do not appear.

Whatever we do and accomplish under the impulse of spiritual knowledge serves, we shall find, to enrich our life; we begin indeed to recognise how our path in life leads always in a direction where we are needed and expected. In the world where spiritual beings are at work, creating and fashioning our individual existence, we begin to see that we are counted upon to do our part, and we understand that the only way we can fulfill what is expected of us and join with our companions in a higher spiritual world, is by following this personal path of life into the spiritual world, and finding within us, as we tread the path, the higher eternal man, the soul and spirit of our being.

Thus does this human knowledge of the spirit bring us face to face with the challenge: Are we going to arrive in that place where it is given to human beings to unite in a common experience of the spiritual — for we are expected there, we are awaited — or, having passed through many births and deaths, shall we come at length to a point where the word of reproach rings out: You were expected, and you did not come!

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