

The Lectures of Rudolf Steiner

Behind the Scenes of External Happenings

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Preface

Interplay between forces unfolded by the human being after death and forces unfolded here on the physical plane. Much that in earlier times might be safely left outside the realm of consciousness will now have to be raised into consciousness. Unlawful methods of acquiring impulses connected with the future. "Propagandists by Action." The Order of murderers known as the "Thugs." Monotheism and man's relationship to his Guardian Angel. The battle of Michael with the Dragon. Aims of occult brotherhoods in connection with the acquisition of power. Contact with the Dead. The necessity for establishing real relationships with the spiritual world. The thought as an actual power in the soul.

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Lecture 1

Zürich, 6th November, 1917

Many years ago, when I was working in Berlin, the news filtered into a theatre during the performance that the Empress of Austria had been assassinated at Geneva by one of the "Propagandists by Action" — so they were being called at that time. ^[1] During one of the intervals I happened to be standing near a man who was then a literary critic in Berlin and has since written philosophical books which have gained a certain reputation. This man voiced his astonishment at the news in a way that still lingers in my memory. He said: "One can understand many things that happen in the world without in the least justifying or approving of them ... one can understand many things that happen ... but that a revolutionary movement should instigate the murder of a sick woman whose continued existence could have made no real difference, whose death anyhow can have no clear connection with any political idea, this" — said the man — "is incomprehensible; it just doesn't make sense."

I am sure this man was expressing what must be the opinion of every right-minded, educated person in the modern world. We are reminded that in the life of men and the course of history, things do happen which seem senseless and purposeless not only when judged by the normal standards but even when they are attributed to some form of aberration.

But events of this very nature — and many, many others might be cited — show that what appears outwardly incomprehensible must inevitably do so because behind the scenes of world affairs — if I may use this expression — spiritual forces and spiritual deeds are playing to and fro [*a phrase meaning back and forth – e.Ed*], both in the good and in the bad sense. These spiritual deeds and happenings are only to be understood when the light of Spiritual Science can be shed into those regions that lie behind the scenes of life in the ordinary world of the senses. Things happen which become intelligible only when they can be illumined by ideas derived from the spiritual world and which, if viewed merely in their connection with the world of the senses, inevitably seem devoid of meaning and purpose — either good or bad. And if by what may be called chance but may also possibly have been a matter of karma in symbolic garb, one has an experience of this kind in a theatre, then it prompts the reaction that what is going on "behind the scenes" looks very different from what is happening on the stage.

I have made these preliminary remarks because I propose today to speak about matters which will be further elaborated when we are next together — matters which it is important for men at the present time to know about and which are connected with events behind the scenes of the physical plane. These things cannot be understood if we give way to the easy-going modern habit of merely generalising about the facts of the spiritual world and their connection with human affairs on the Earth; they become intelligible only when we penetrate as deeply as possible into the concrete realities of the spiritual world.

You know from many passages in the Lecture-Courses that the evolution of mankind is to be divided into certain periods: the vast periods of the Saturn-, Sun-, Moon-evolutions; the shorter periods of the Lemurian, Atlantean and our own Post-Atlantean epochs; and again within these shorter periods which, however, extend over long stretches of time, we speak of certain epochs of culture within the Post-Atlantean period: the ancient Indian, the ancient Persian, the Egypto-Chaldean, the Greco-Latin and our own Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch.

The reason for speaking of these periods is that the faculties of humanity as a whole — in this case more particularly the faculties of soul — change fundamentally from one period to another; they change because a very real evolution takes place in every such period — I am speaking now of the shortest. Every such period contains something which mankind is obliged to undergo, something which may cause either happiness or unhappiness, which has to be realised and understood, which is the source of impulses of will leading to deeds, and so forth. The tasks devolving upon the Egypto-Chaldean epoch of civilisation differed from those of the Greco-Latin epoch — and our own age, too, faces its own specific tasks.

A really true idea of the distinct tasks of the several epochs in regard to the development of certain qualities — especially those of which we shall speak today — cannot be formed without taking into account the experiences contributed by human life as a whole to the external development of which history speaks and to which the materialistic thought of today prefers to confine itself. No really adequate characterisation of the successive epochs can, however, be drawn from these experiences on the physical plane, for they, after all, constitute only one part of that cycle of human life which stretches from birth to death and from death onwards to a new birth. For in what actually happens, there is a constant interplay and interaction between the forces that come down from the world in which man lives between death and a new birth and those which are unfolded in his life here, on the physical plane. There is an unceasing interplay between the forces unfolded by human beings after death and those operating on the physical plane.

Conditions throughout the Fourth Post-Atlantean epoch were such that certain things might safely be withheld from the consciousness of man. Many things in respect of which men of the Greco-Latin epoch might without harm be kept unconscious must, however, enter more and more into the consciousness of those living in the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch. During this Fifth epoch, human beings must become conscious of much that in earlier times could remain in the unconscious.

These things unfold according to certain spiritual laws, under a kind of spiritual necessity. It is part of the destiny of the human race that certain faculties of comprehension and also certain forces of will, shall unfold in a particular epoch. In this Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch humanity becomes ripe for the knowledge of certain things, just as in earlier epochs men became ripe in other respects. One thing in respect of which humanity has become sufficiently mature in the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch seems highly paradoxical to the modern mind, because public opinion moves for the most part in exactly the opposite direction, would prefer, as it were, to *lead* men in the opposite direction. But this will be of no avail. The spiritual forces with which men are, if I may put it so, inoculated, in the course of the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch, will be stronger than the wishes of certain people, stronger than the dictates of public opinion.

One of these things — and it will assert itself most powerfully — is the guiding or directing of men more deeply in line with occult principles than has ever before been possible. It lies in the general character of evolution that during this Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch, certain conditions connected with the exercise of power, of influence, must pass into the hands of small groups who will wield great power over other, large masses of people.

A certain section of public opinion vehemently resists this trend; nevertheless it will assert itself and for the following reason. During the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch, simply because of inner maturity and evolutionary necessity, a large portion of humanity will unfold certain spiritual faculties, a certain natural capacity to see into the spiritual world. This portion of humanity, which will indeed provide the best foundation for the future Sixth Post-Atlantean epoch — this portion of humanity, while in process of preparation during the Fifth epoch, will show little inclination to be actively concerned with the affairs of the physical plane. Such men will have little interest in physical affairs and will be engrossed in ennobling the life of soul, in regulating certain matters connected with the spiritual life. And because of this, others less spiritually inclined will be able to seize for themselves certain factors connected with the exercise of power — to get them into their own hands.

This is something that arises with a kind of necessity. Among men who were cognisant of these things it was the subject of much discussion throughout the last third of the nineteenth century, and they always stressed the vital necessity that this potential should be directed - not into evil but into good channels. During the last third of the nineteenth century, especially just before its turn, one could hear occultists on every hand insisting that precautions must be taken to ensure that such means of power come into the hands of worthy men. Naturally, with the exception of a very few groups, opinions differed as to who were really worthy; each group championed the claims of those with whom the world had brought it into contact. But the whole matter was the subject of almost day-to-day conversation among occultists and, in a certain sense, has remained so to this day.

Simply because man attains the requisite degree of maturity, other things, too, will emerge in the course of the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch, will become known to men and also pass into the sphere of the will. These are things which lead still further, so far indeed that they cannot but cause grave anxiety to everybody who is cognisant of them.

This Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch confronts the fact that the physical apparatus of human thinking becomes capable of understanding certain factors relating to illness and processes of healing, connections of Nature-processes with illnesses. This causes anxiety to those possessing real knowledge of these matters because their aim now must be to ensure that those who will be chosen to bring the relevant teachings and impulses to men will do so in the right and worthy way. For two possibilities exist: information about these things will either be conveyed to men in a form which does harm, or it may be imparted in a way which is for the good of the world. These things are connected with the most intimate depths of certain conditions relating to human propagation, with circumstances connected with illnesses and with the onset of death, and when knowledge concerning them spreads among mankind they give rise to thoughts and impulses of deep import and significance. And the purpose of the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch is that men shall become free enough to be enlightened about certain truths hitherto kept in the more unconscious region of the human soul, and to master them.

Those who knew, concerned themselves deeply with all the implications of these things and with the steps that could be taken in one direction or the other. For everything that can arise in this way bestows a certain power, enables a hand to be taken to a very far-reaching extent in the shaping of human affairs. All these considerations, as I said, occupied an important place in spiritual-scientific movements during the nineteenth century, and still do so, to this day, in connection with the evolution of the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch.

Another fact must here be considered, a fact that to anyone cognisant of it, is very significant, and must therefore be brought into relation with many others. I have mentioned it here and there in the Lecture-Courses. When, having crossed the threshold of the spiritual world, a man begins to make observations there, peculiar facts, essentially individual facts come before his soul's eye. And then a deeper scrutiny of things which at first sight seem to have nothing to do with each other, reveals that they are indeed connected, that they mutually illumine and explain each other and in doing so greatly facilitate penetration into the nature of the spiritual world.

The other fact, of which I am now going to speak, will, at first, certainly not give you the impression of being connected with what I have just said, yet the very contrary proves to be the case. This other fact is the following: When one turns to the souls of human beings who have died in our present age and learns the circumstances of their existence, one perceives souls among them who feel grave apprehension at the prospect of coming into contact with those human souls who, here on Earth, met their death as did the Empress of Austria at that time in Geneva. One discovers that human beings sent through the Gate of Death by, let us say, the "Propagandists by Action," are a cause of grave anxiety to certain human beings who passed through death in a normal way and then have further experiences in the spiritual world. One notices, as it were, that those who died in the normal way and who may have occasion to contact these other souls, are fearful of such contact after death, and shrink from it.

I beg you, in such a case, to ignore the emotional paradox. Such innumerable possibilities of association and contact are open to souls that it would be out of place to allow oneself here to be swayed by feelings of compassion, however natural and justifiable they may be. A case like this must be viewed quite objectively. It is a fact that souls who have passed through the Gate of Death normally, feel a certain dread of those whose death was brought about by violent means resembling those adopted by anarchist propaganda.

Now there is a certain very strange connection between this last fact and the other of which I spoke previously. Closer scrutiny reveals that these souls who met their death by violent means come into possession of certain knowledge in the spiritual world after death, which the other souls do not

wish to receive from them prematurely, before it is right and healthy to do so. For the very reason that here, on the physical plane, they were deprived of life in this way and sent with such violence through the Gate of Death, these souls retain a certain possibility of turning to account the powers and forces they possessed on Earth, for example, the power of intellect. From the other side, from the spiritual world, such souls can make use of the powers which were bound up with the physical body here on Earth and achieve with them something quite other than it is possible to achieve during life in the physical body. Thereby these souls are able to acquire knowledge of certain things *earlier* than is really conducive to the progress of human evolution.

It is very remarkable that both meaning and purpose are revealed in this way in a number of deeds hitherto seeming to lack all rhyme or reason. These deeds assume a strange aspect to one who sees things as they really are. In the physical world, all kinds of nonsense is talked; it may sound plausible but is, well just nonsense to closer observation. Here, in the physical world, it is said: people like these "Propagandists by Action" who murder others, are simply out to draw attention to misery in the world; it is a means of active agitation, etc., etc.. But one who analyses the matter and tries to bring it into line with the laws of social life will realise at once that, although such deeds appear to be senseless, their meaning suddenly becomes clear in the light of the knowledge that souls sent into the spiritual world in this violent way, acquire knowledge which they really ought not yet to possess and of which souls who died a normal death have a positive dread.

To investigate the causes underlying assassinations committed at various times, like that of the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, to discover the position of these souls who come into the spiritual world with certain secrets in their keeping — with consequences of which we shall speak — to investigate these things occultly was of course the important thing. A merely external view of the series of such assassinations may ascribe them all to chance; but if one analyses the matter, if one considers who the individuals thus sent to their death really are, it becomes clear that they have been selected, as it were — not, of course from the standpoint of the physical world but from that of the spiritual world. Investigation of this aspect of many of the well-known assassinations reveals something very remarkable. In the cases of Carnot, ^[2] the Empress Elizabeth of Austria and certain others, the remarkable fact is revealed that although the possibility of achieving something by their assassinations certainly existed, it was, as a matter of fact, not achieved at all. It would have been achieved if souls had been found to be their "customers," if I may put it so. If that had happened, both sides would have incurred transcendental, super-sensible guilt: those who had passed through death in the normal way would have had experiences which would have driven them into blameworthy paths, and those whose deaths had been caused by violence, by assassination, would have been guilty of divulging knowledge before the proper time.

Higher Spiritual Beings, Higher Hierarchies, prevented this from happening because of certain consequences which would have ensued and which it was necessary to frustrate for the sake of the well-being of a certain part of mankind. By the intervention of higher Spiritual Beings, the harm that might have resulted was prevented. And so there was evidence here of an attempt made with ineffective means, or rather, with means that had been deprived of their effectiveness. It was an attempt made in the spiritual world, behind the scenes of the physical world.

Probing into the deeper foundations of such matters, we discover the source of the impulses underlying them. And in the case of many of the assassinations which were news in Europe and will be known to you, the impulses — they were spiritual impulses, remember — were not really primary and original but were derivatives; they were "defence measures," if this rather trivial expression is permissible. The purpose of these deeds was to put a stop to something else, to frustrate other deeds, or, better said, to prevent the consequences of other deeds tending in the same direction.

This is a very mysterious matter and can only be understood by scrutinising what, exactly, it was proposed to prevent, against what, exactly, these defence measures were taken. Spiritual Science penetrates here into things deeply connected with the impulses of human life in the present and in the future and of which it is extremely difficult to speak because they everywhere run counter to certain naive and even justifiable interests of men. The matter becomes comprehensible only when we take into consideration the fact that all these attempts by means of assassinations of which I have spoken up to now, were amateurishly directed, were not under "expert" guidance. They were attempts made without thorough knowledge of the occult connections; they were defence measures born of fear, and they were not under united leadership. They become intelligible only when we study the plan which they were actually intended to avert, and which was itself being pursued and staged with much greater insight. In the nineteenth century, a remarkable Order was still in existence over in the East: the Order of the "Thugs." This Order, which flourished in a certain region of Asia, did not arise out of mere desire — the desire, I mean, of its members — to gain their ends. The members of this Order were charged with the task of murdering certain persons named by very secret and unknown superiors. It was an Order of murderers, so to speak, with the task of putting certain individuals to death. Evidence of its activity filtered through from time to time in news announcing the murder of such and such a person. The murder was committed on the orders of unknown superiors who had charged some member of this Order of the Thugs to carry it out.

In the places where this was undertaken, the aim was well understood. By arranging circumstances of the physical plane in such a way that the establishment of this Order of the Thugs was possible, and then by directing its activities as required, the plan was to bring about the violent death of such persons as would be equipped after their death with the faculty for learning certain secrets. The individuals who managed all this also organised corresponding conditions here, on the physical plane, to act as "mirrors" — "mirror events" as they are called in occultism. Such was the intention: to organise the appropriate "mirror events." Certain events of this kind — if only a few — have actually been organised on the physical plane. It is done in this way: certain suitable personalities are trained to be mediums, put into a mediumistic condition and by certain machinations the currents from the spiritual world are directed to the medium. The medium then divulges certain secrets which can only be disclosed by this means, namely, that in yonder world a person killed by a deed of violence, turns to account here, on the Earth, those forces which owing to his violent death can still be made use of; as souls, they fathom certain secrets and then instill them into the medium. And it is possible for those interested in such research here, on the Earth, to investigate what these souls are instilling by such means.

What is investigated in this way is a sort of "premature spiritual birth" — if I may use this expression. The souls who passed through the Gate of Death in the normal way and are concerned with such things, know that they must be preparing themselves now — and they make it plain that they are engaged in this preparation — in order, later on, when humanity has sufficiently matured, to bring down many things to the Earth and inject them into the Earth by rightful means. This, indeed, is an important task devolving upon a number of human beings now passing through the Gate of Death. Having attained the requisite maturity for certain secrets at the right time — not prematurely, as is the case when forces generated by violent deaths are put into operation — the task of these souls is to use and apply the *normal* forces. It is actually the task of these human beings to acquire control of these forces and then to inspire them into men living on the Earth who are not mediums at all but who should experience them in the normal, legitimate way — through genuine Inspiration.

In normal life this would be a matter of waiting. But because, as the result of occult crime, these things which ought to come much later are sent as premature spiritual births along the path indicated — because of this, individuals intending evil to humanity and who in this sense are "black" or "grey" magicians, capture such secrets for their own ends.

Behind the scenes of outer happenings, such things have been proceeding during our own decades. The intention was this: to place in the hands of a certain group of men, firstly, the secret of the control of masses — I spoke of this to begin with. It is the secret of how to gain extensive control over those masses who concern themselves little with external affairs, yet possess spiritual capacities and are especially qualified to assist in the preparation of the Sixth Post-Atlantean epoch — it is the secret, too, of how the art of controlling these masses can be placed in the hands of a few individuals.

That was the one aim. The other is something that will play an important role in the future: it is a matter of acquiring the secret means whereby factors connected with processes of disease, with the process of propagation, may be given a particular turn.

Among a few friends, I have already spoken of these things. The age of materialism is striving, through the work of certain circles, to paralyse, to eliminate all spiritual development in mankind, to bring human beings to a point where simply by temperament and character they reject everything that is spiritual and regard it as folly.

This trend — and it is already perceptible in some individuals today — will intensify. People will actually long for the time when the Spiritual is universally deemed to be insanity, craziness! Attempts will be made to achieve this end by inoculations; just as viruses have been discovered as means of protection against illnesses, so certain inoculations will be used to influence the human body in such a way that it provides no place for the spiritual proclivities of the soul. Human beings will be immunised against any predisposition for spiritual ideas ... such, at least, will be the endeavour. They will try by inoculation to bring it about that even in childhood, human beings lose the urge towards the spiritual life. This is only one of the aspects of that more intimate knowledge, relating to the connection of Nature-processes and Nature-specifics with the human organism, which must arise during the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch. These things will certainly find their way into the life of mankind when the time comes. The only question is whether success will have attended those previous attempts — by means of such premature spiritual births as I have mentioned — to put knowledge into the hands of individuals who will use it for their own ends ... or whether the knowledge of these things will come in the right way, at the right time, and thus promote the well-being of humanity.

There was nothing amateurish about the methods of the organisation designed for promoting these premature spiritual births; with the help of the Order of murderers known as the Thugs, it worked very systematically, albeit in a way which horrifies anyone who has the good of humanity at heart. It worked systematically, not amateurishly, with full knowledge of the means required.

Because the effort was being made through instruments acquired prematurely from the spiritual world to place part of mankind in the egotistical possession of knowledge which, as humanity matures will be acquired in any case during the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch ... because this was being striven for, there arose in other groups of men the uneasiness and anxiety which staged this "Propaganda by Action" as a counter-blast, so to speak; it was intended to be a help but, being the child of fear, it was an amateurish attempt, a provisional attempt made with ineffective means.

These things that proceed behind the scenes of external happenings, are of deep import. Nor would they be mentioned here if it were not a necessity and a duty to bring them to the attention of people trained to some extent in Spiritual Science. It is a necessity for such things to pass into the consciousness of humanity in the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch. Only so can the goal of earthly evolution be attained.

Human beings must embark upon the unpleasant task of abandoning the mode of thinking which the universities produce in the so-called educated classes today; a time must come when a number of human beings declare themselves ready to accept this uncomfortable world-conception which takes its direction, its concepts, its ideas, from the spiritual world. For men must not, dare not, linger in the condition of sleep that is so congenial to those abstract concepts for which the age of materialism strives and then calls "noble."

Thinking over what I have thus indicated, you will realise that a whole number of possibilities exist for making use of currents emanating from the spiritual world in order to bring evil things to pass on the Earth during this Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch. There are many, many such possibilities — today I have told you of *one*. And the obligation to stress the necessity that such knowledge should reach the consciousness of a certain number of souls — this is bound up with the fundamental character of our age. The second half of the nineteenth century was an extremely important period. I have often indicated to circles of friends here and there that the year 1841 was a critical time, a year of decision and crisis. This, of course, is not discovered by looking merely at the events that happened in the physical world, but only by studying these events in connection with what was going on in the spiritual world. The year 1841 was, in truth, the critical year in respect of the onset of the age of materialism, for at that time a very definite battle began in the spiritual worlds — a battle waged by certain Spirits, Spirits of Darkness as we may call them, belonging to the hierarchical rank of the Angeloi. In the spiritual worlds they fought out this battle until the autumn of 1879. They were striving for many and definite aims, only one of which shall be mentioned today. Between the years 1841 and 1879, decision was to be taken as to whether a certain store of spiritual wisdom could be made sufficiently mature to trickle gradually down to the Earth from the last third of the nineteenth century onwards, that is to say, to enter into the souls of men as a stimulus to spiritual knowledge, to the knowledge described today as that of Spiritual Science, which has only been possible since that time.

The aim of these Angeloi-Spirits between the years 1841 and 1879 was to prevent what was thus to flow down to the Earth, from coming to maturity in the spiritual world. But these Spirits of Darkness were defeated in the war they waged against the Spirits of Light during this period. In the year 1879, on a smaller scale, an event came to pass of the kind that has several times come to pass in the course of evolution, and has always been pictured symbolically as the victory of Michael, or St. George, over the Dragon. In the year 1879, too, the Dragon was overcome in a certain realm. This time the "Dragon" was the Angeloi-Spirits who were striving for but could not achieve the aim I have indicated. In 1879, therefore, they were cast out of the spiritual world into the world of men — and here, in this world, they wander among humanity. They are present here, sending their forces into men's thoughts, feelings and impulses of will, egging them on to this undertaking or another. They have not been able to prevent the onset of the age when the spiritual knowledge flows down — their defeat in the battle lies precisely in this — for the spiritual knowledge is here and will unfold increasingly; human beings will be able to acquire the faculty of seeing into the spiritual world.

But having been cast down to the Earth, these Angeloi-Spirits are intent upon doing harm with the down-flowing knowledge; they want to guide it into wrongful channels, to rob it of its power for good and lead it into paths of evil. In short, having been cast down since the year 1879, their aim is to achieve here, with the help of men, what they were unable to achieve with the help of the Spirits in yonder world. Their aim is to bring ruin to that part of the good plan for world-evolution which consists in causing the knowledge of the control of masses, the knowledge concerning birth, illness and death, among other things, to spread among men when the time is ripe. These Spirits of Darkness want to spread such knowledge too soon, by means of the premature spiritual births. Among their other objects and activities, these Spirits operate in the manner I have just indicated.

The only way to combat the influence of these Ahrimanic Beings is to realise that against certain aims of Ahriman nothing avails except to see through him, to know that he is there. I have indicated this repeatedly in the Mystery Plays; think only of the end of the last Play. The Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch must evolve to the stage where many human beings address the Ahrimanic Powers and Beings as Faust addresses Mephistopheles: "In thy Nothingness I hope to find the All." Men must be resolved to look into that realm where materialism sees the "Nothingness" and there see ... the spiritual world! Ahriman-Mephistopheles is then obliged to speak to such men as he speaks to Faust when sending him to the "Mothers":

"I will not grudge my praise before thou goest, For well I see that thou the Devil knowest."

The other day, I said, jokingly, in Dornach: "Mephistopheles would not have made such a remark to Woodrow Wilson! To Woodrow Wilson he would have said: 'The little fellows never notice the Devil, even when he has them by the collar!'" Truly, it is of the greatest importance that men shall learn to see into the realities of the spiritual world. And, believe me, it is simply the fact, that when, on the one side, there is some special necessity, the opposing forces are also especially strong — and so, today, men put up strong resistance to these things, struggle against them.

I beg you here in Zürich, in your laudable and welcome efforts to bring Spiritual Science to certain still very hostile circles, to be under no illusions! Many disappointments — and at first, nothing but disappointments — await all efforts to direct things that must come to pass, into the right paths. This, of course, should never deter us. We must be so imbued with the impulse needed for the present age, that we do what has to be done without regard to results — whether they fall out one way or the other.

This attitude alone makes achievement possible — and then it is often reached by an entirely unexpected route. I beg you to remember, too, that a great deal must often be done that yields no gratifying results. For the propaganda of Spiritual Science is a different matter from other current forms of propaganda. In these other domains, people are for the most part told things with which they are as familiar as devout ladies sitting in church are familiar with what the clergyman says from the pulpit. The programmes of most leagues and societies contain subject matter that can be imbibed very light-heartedly and superficially — it usually is, and remains, pure abstraction. Fine programmes are made — but these programmes are unrelated to and incapable of penetrating into reality. If it is our desire to cultivate spiritual strivings in this Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch, we must regard them as we regard the *Living*. What is the nature of the Living? The Living, the Life, in the realm of Spirit has its image in the realm of the Living in Nature. I ask you: is a fish in the sea afraid of laying a number of eggs that come to nothing? Ask yourselves how many of the eggs that are actually laid, turn into fish? How many come to nothing? As it is in life, so, too, it is in the spiritual life. You may speak for long years, on countless occasions, to vast numbers of people ... and you must be satisfied if interest, at most, is awakened in a few among them — for that inheres in the nature of the Living. Achievement in any degree is only possible when one proceeds as Nature proceeds — Nature being the image of the Spirit. What would happen if Nature hesitated to allow living beings to lay the eggs that come to nothing, because a number obviously perish in the course of a year? The Nature-process continues and, moreover, achieves evolution. Considerations as to whether any particular thing can be achieved, whether it is in line with this or with that — are of no moment. What is of moment is that in the thing itself we see the impulse and that we simply cannot do otherwise than carry this impulse into the world.

And looking at the reasons — a few of which have been indicated today — why this impulse must be carried out into the world during the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch ... truly they are serious enough! Where necessity is greatest, remember, there the opposition is strongest. Men will have to learn to view all these things that come to pass here, on the physical plane, and in our time present a truly terrible aspect, in their connection with happenings behind the scenes. Only then do they become intelligible. But the historians, the sociologists, the economists, the politicians of today, who derive their rules and laws exclusively from the physical plane well, as far as the actual necessities are concerned, they act like persons who begin some important task by stretching themselves on a *chaise longue* and going to sleep, believing they can achieve it in the world of dream. The majority of those who belong to the world of culture, to the several branches of science today, really do set to work like this; in their state of dream they let reality pass them by. How do men write treatises on history, on sociology? They write without a single inkling of the real forces at play behind the subject of their dreamings. The realities underlying such deeply decisive events as we are witnessing nowadays, lie around modern men of science like the walls of a room into which they have been carried during sleep, have never seen and in which they go on sleeping. This is how materialistic science acquaints itself with the world.

In my book *Vom Menschenratsel (The Riddle of Man)* I have described a mode of consciousness that is at the same time a "seeing" (*Schauendes Bewusstsein*). This must, to a certain degree, become a faculty in humanity of the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch for the following reason. Certain secrets must come into the open because otherwise they would be spread among humanity by unlawful means such as those of which I have told you today. As I said, it is not easy to speak of these things, but in duty bound it is necessary to do so. Men must acquire for many things a gift of observation very different from the clumsy faculty of observation in vogue today.

In connection with what has been said, I want to add the following. Firstly, men can acquire something, even today, by trying to take things normally ascribed to chance seriously and regard them as hints for deepening the life of soul. Suppose you read that at one place or another, on this or that date, a certain man died. A great deal may light up if one asks oneself: "How would it have been if that man had died three months earlier or three months later?" reckoning, of course, merely with possibilities. But you may be sure that if such a question is put, forces are released whereby you will discern other things. Or again, while traveling in a train you may have a conversation that means a great deal to you. A materialist, naturally, would regard such a thing as a lucky stroke of chance. But those who are trying to penetrate behind the scenes of outer existence will be alert to such incidents; without forcing ideas too far but feeling that there is something in these "accidents", they pay attention, because these things point to forces playing into and between the events — forces whose origin is neither mechanical nor mathematical. That is one of the things I wanted to say.

The other is this, and I want to reiterate it with emphasis. In spite of the materialism of our time, much that is spiritual is revealing itself to men. But it goes against the grain to speak about these spiritual experiences. When someone becomes communicative, because he trusts you, he will often speak of what he, or some other person, has done ... If he tells you honestly and genuinely why, for example, he founded some newspaper, why he did this or that, he relates a dream, or what seemed to be a dream; he tells you of an impulse from the spiritual world. Such things happen at every turn nowadays — far more often than people think. Far more deeds are prompted by spiritual impulses than is usually imagined. But people hesitate to admit such things because they are as a rule not taken seriously.

It is well to deepen contemplation in both these directions, to be alert, in these days, to any sign or experience which strikes one's attention; and also to observe — for the opportunities are there — how in the good and in the bad sense, things are revealed from the spiritual world, which impel men

to act. Nowadays, above all, this is more often the case than people think.

That is what I wanted to put before you today. Next Tuesday we will continue the subject.

Lecture 2

Zürich, 13th November, 1917

In the lecture here a week ago I dealt with a theme of vital importance in view of the events that are breaking with such tragic consequences into the life of mankind. This theme may be indicated, briefly, by saying: "It is urgently necessary for mankind once again to know and realise that the physical world is connected with spiritual realities, to become conscious of the fact that a spiritual world is working into the actual details of physical existence."

Our age, above all, must be alive to the necessity for the spreading of this consciousness among mankind. The human being of the present time does not differ so very markedly in outward, physical appearance from human beings living in those past ages with which ordinary history deals. History, after all, goes no farther back than the Third Post-Atlantean period. What lies before that is a very vague chapter in the only kind of historical scholarship that is recognised by modern man. Although in the intervening period, man's life of soul has undergone very great changes indeed, it cannot be said that equal changes have taken place so far as the external, physical organism is concerned. Therefore people neither notice, nor try to notice, what is really happening as the outcome of impulses from the spiritual world. We are living in very momentous times. This has nothing to do with the trivial remark, so often heard, that this age is an age of transition. Naturally, every age is one of transition. The point is to know *what* is in transition in any particular age.

We become particularly conscious of what is thus in transition in our time — that is to say, of what is assuming new forms and undergoing great change — when we are able to observe not only the life of beings moving about the Earth in physical bodies, but also the beings who do not belong to the physical world — among them, the Dead. In the world in which the human being lives between death and a new birth — there, the changes, especially the transformation that is proceeding during this present age, are to be observed in all their deep significance. But modern man is loath to take in earnest matters concerning the spiritual world. The fact that this is so gives rise to many reflections in regard to the growth and existence of Anthroposophy. It really is the case that one need not be particularly biased in favour of the ideas represented in the Anthroposophical Movement before being willing to advocate them. In other Movements — and countless numbers of leagues, unions and the like are founded today, all of them convinced that they represent the most urgent needs of the world — in all such Movements people have the subjective fanaticism of their particular cause. They are infatuated with their own programme, maintaining that it will bring universal happiness, that it is an absolute necessity. In the case of the Anthroposophical Movement, such infatuation is simply not necessary, for the urge to advocate such ideas may come from something quite different. Briefly — and I must be brief because we can only be together for such short intervals — let me say the following: When a man has become convinced of the truth of the idea of Anthroposophy, he is impelled to do everything he can to spread them by the feeling of compassion for those who need these ideas at the present time — in other words, practically every human being with whom one comes into contact — compassion for men who need these ideas and without them will fall upon evil times.

In the last lecture here I tried to give you a conception of how a great deal that is unintelligible on the physical plane only begins to be intelligible when it can be viewed in its connection with the spiritual world. Today I want to put before you certain other points of view, which to begin with will appear to relate to quite different matters. We will start from a very common experience. Many people who consider themselves qualified to pass judgment on such matters, regard it as sign of religious enlightenment to repudiate ideas presented in Anthroposophy, for example, that on the other side of the threshold of the spiritual world, many Spiritual Beings, whole Hierarchies of Spiritual Beings are to be found ... Angeloi, Archangeloi, and still higher Hierarchies. It is considered to be a sign of enlightenment to dwell upon the One God and aspire to establish an intimate and direct relationship with Him. This is regarded as the only possible form of Monotheism and many people evince something like horror at a teaching that speaks of many Spiritual Beings.

Let us be quite clear about what this really implies. When a man's attitude to the spiritual world is merely that of the "enlightened" Church today, his relationship to the spiritual world — even if it is only in his feeling — is of a definite kind; it is simply a relationship with his Guardian Angel, the Angelos with whom he is, in fact, connected. And this Angelos — the only Being with whom he is able to feel related — he calls his God; if he is a Christian he calls him Christ; he confuses his Angelos with Christ. This may be difficult to understand, but it is so. Protestant theologians who claim to be enlightened and inveigh against Polytheism, urging men to establish direct relationship with the one Being, Christ — whatever they may preach concerning Christ, the truth is that what they say has only to do with the relationship of the human being to his Angelos. Monotheism in our time is in danger of becoming a worship of the Angelos of each individual human being.

Men are still unwilling to admit many things that are nevertheless there. Even the crudest circumstances, however, prove to an objective observer that such illusions set men well on the path to calamitous ideas. This worship of man's own Angelos is the reason why each individual has his own God, merely imagining that he shares with others a Godhead who is common to them all. The truth is that the monotheist of today has only his own individual Angelos and because there is such uniformity in the words with which each human being describes his own egotistical relation to the Angelos, people imagine that they are speaking of the Divinity who is the one God of them all. If this state of things were to continue, individuals would develop, still more strongly, the tendency that is taking such a terrible form among the nations today. Although the nations still theorise about the one universal Godhead, they do not — and this holds good above all at the present time — really acknowledge this one Godhead, because each of them prefers to have its own special God.

This, however, is merely what comes to light in crude, external form. In reality, every human being today wants to have his own God and he gives the name of "Monotheism" to the relationship between himself and his own Angelos. And because conditions are so clouded in an age when men's only desire is for perception of the Material, the truth of what I have just said does not occur to them.

Today there is evidence on all hands that when one speaks of man's concrete relationship with the spiritual world to those who as yet know nothing about Anthroposophy, they are unwilling to go into such matters; they are afraid of it all. They will not summon up courage to think about impulses that are said to come from the spiritual world. The same tendency has always existed in times of crisis and we are living in one such time nowadays. It is grievous to see how utterly inattentive men are to the momentous and tragic events of the present time, how disinclined to pay the necessary heed, except when driven to it by material considerations. The individual has to be trained, so to speak, before his attention is aroused to the fact that in the events of our time, deep and trenchant impulses in the life of mankind are placed before the soul.

That, after all, is why people simply did not listen when it was said that momentous, incisive thoughts and undertakings are called for by men if the world is to be lifted out of its present pitiable state — and that such thoughts and undertakings must be born from spiritual knowledge, real spiritual knowledge. Constant references to the universal Spirit, all the talk about inner, spiritual deepening and the like — none of it leads anywhere. What is essential is that men of the present time shall establish real and concrete relations with the spiritual world. It is not difficult for us to realise that even in earlier times when men were in closer contact with the spiritual world, their attention was directed to those concrete relationships which are no longer understood today. In earlier times men did not speak vaguely of swarms of human beings on the Earth below with some kind of Godhead up above, but they spoke in terms of concrete realities.

The most beautiful and significant fruits of these concrete relationships with the spiritual world are prophetic utterances like those of Daniel, of the Apocalypse, where men are not merely bidden to trust in a God, to believe in a God, but where they are told of the first heavenly kingdom, the second, the third ... told in all concrete reality of the connection of the spiritual world with the physical, material world. Humanity has lost all aptitude for speaking thus concretely of the relation of the Spiritual to the Physical, would prefer that everything should be painted the same colour, if I may put it so. Men like best of all to devise theories according to which human beings the Earth over can find equal material happiness. The socialist of today insists that certain ideas are right and proper for the life of man — right for England, for America, for Russia, for Asia; he thinks that if one and all arranged their national affairs according to socialist principles, the happiness which is the dream of modern man would come to the Earth of itself. All these ideas are abstract, unreal. Ignorance of the fact that something quite specific arises in one region of the Earth out of a particular people, something quite different in another region out of another people, the inability to understand the great difference between the West and the East — this is what causes endless confusion and chaos. For only when a man is able to build a bridge from his soul to the objective realities, can he co-operate fruitfully in shaping earthly existence.

People are unwilling to build such a bridge. Inner reasons have lately caused me to speak to friends in very many places of an event — momentous in its effect upon evolution — which took place in the last third of the nineteenth century; it is an event known to all occult schools although they are not always able to give accurate details of its actual course. I will speak of it briefly, again today. From the year 1841 onwards, a battle was waged in regions of the spiritual world, between certain Beings of the higher Hierarchies and other superior Beings. The Beings who rebelled and waged war from 1841 to 1879 had been used, before that time, in the service of the wise guidance of worlds. Even those Beings who rebel and become evil Beings of Darkness may, at certain other times, serve good and useful purposes. I am speaking, therefore, of Beings who up to the year 1841 had been used by higher Spirits in the service of the wise guidance of worlds but whose aims, from then onwards, ran counter to the aims of the Beings superior to them. These Beings of lower rank fought a great battle in the spiritual world — one of those battles that often take place — but at different levels — and are portrayed in legend and symbolism as the battle of Michael with the Dragon. In the autumn of 1879 this battle ended by certain Spirits of Darkness being cast down from the spiritual world to the Earth. Since then they have been working among men, creeping into their impulses of will, into their motives, into their ideas, indeed into all human affairs. And so, since the autumn of 1879, certain Spirits of Darkness have been among humanity and if men wish to understand earthly happenings, they must be alive to the presence of these Beings.

It is absolutely correct to say that in the year 1879 these Beings were cast down to the Earth. This made the heavens free but the Earth full of them. From that time onwards their habitation is no longer to be found in the heavens — they are on Earth.

If I am to describe the aim pursued by these Beings in their war of rebellion from 1841 to 1879, I must say the following: — They wanted to be able to prevent the spiritual wisdom, which will be revealed from the twentieth century onwards, from flowing into the souls of men. Only by the removal of the hindering Spirits of Darkness from the spiritual realm could the minds and hearts of men be opened to receive, from the twentieth century onwards, the spiritual knowledge destined for them; only so was the flow of this spiritual knowledge possible. Wandering as they now do among men, these Spirits of Darkness make it their business to spread confusion; from their arena here, on Earth, they want to prevent the establishment of the right attitude *vis-à-vis* the spiritual truths, they want to withhold from men the blessings which it is the purpose of the spiritual truths to bring.

Intimate and penetrating knowledge of these things is the only means whereby the aims of the Spirits of Darkness may be counteracted. Certain occult brotherhoods, however, make it their business to work in exactly the opposite sense; they want to retain the wisdom exclusively within their own narrow circles, in order to exploit it in connection with their lusts for power. We are living in the midst of this struggle. On the one side there is the necessity for men to be led along the right paths by the assimilation of the spiritual truths; on the other side there are enclosed occult brotherhoods of an evil kind, desiring to prevent these truths from finding their way to men, with the result that they remain dull and stupid as regards the spiritual world, and thus make it possible for those within narrowly enclosed brotherhoods to carry on their intrigues from there.

Events of the present time bristle with such intrigues and machinations, and calamity looms ahead if men will not realise that these machinations are in full swing. You will feel at once that light is shed upon the real background of these things when I tell you of certain truths which have matured in our time — truths which must fall as it were like ripened fruit from the spiritual world into the kingdom of men but are prevented from spreading — against which, moreover, men are instinctively prejudiced because they are afraid of them.

In this connection I want to speak as concretely as possible. The fact that in 1879 a number of Spirits of Darkness were cast into the kingdom of men, has weighty and significant consequences — one of which is that since that time, clear thinking has assumed a far, far greater importance than it ever had before. At no other period could it have been said, having regard to the inner necessities of evolution, that clarity of thinking is as essential as eating and drinking are to the maintenance of physical life. For if man's thinking lacks clarity in the age in which we are actually living and in the times to come, he will not be able to see in their right light the ripened truths which are to fall from the spiritual world. Above all, he will fail to realise the vast and profound significance of the Mystery of Golgotha, of the Coming of Christ, for the whole evolution of humanity. Many there are who speak of Christ Jesus. Modern theology, however, would actually like to prevent anyone from speaking of the deep purpose imparted to the earthly evolution of mankind by the Mystery of Golgotha. In the nature of things, fulfilment of what was to come to pass through the Mystery of Golgotha has been, and is, both slow and gradual. And in our present century, for the first time, this becomes intensely evident.

Previous epochs still enjoyed a heritage from the days when spirituality pervaded the atavistic inner life of man. Now, for the first time, man must strive for spirituality — if he desires it. And so, in our day, and actually only from the year 1879 onwards, very definite phenomena appear. Because external observation has become so crude, they are really only clearly to be perceived when the eyes of the soul are directed to that realm which the human being enters on passing through the Gate of Death. For souls born before the year 1879 and those born afterwards pass into the spiritual world in different ways. Truly, it is a momentous event of which we are here speaking.

One consequence of this event is that in their souls, human beings more and more come to resemble the thought, to resemble that which they regard as knowledge. This will seem a strange truth to the modern mind, but it is so, nevertheless. To see certain things in their proper light, with clarity of thought, with thoughts saturated with reality — that is vitally important. It is good to see Darwinism in the proper light — as I tried to present it in the public lecture yesterday. ^[3] To regard Darwinism as the one and only valid conception of the world, believing the only possible truth to be that man descends from the animals — and reiterating the thought: I descend from the animals, I descend entirely from forces which also produce the animals ... such thoughts, in our age, tend to make the soul resembles its own conceptions of itself. This is really an important matter! When the body is discarded, the soul is then confronted with the sorry fate of having to perceive its resemblance with its own thought! A man who lives in the physical body believing that animal forces alone were at work in his evolution, fashions for himself a kind of consciousness in which he will perceive his own likeness to animal nature. For since the event of 1879, the character of the Fifth Post-Atlantean epoch has been such that the souls of men are transformed into the ideas they form of themselves. That is why I said: It is not necessary to be particularly biased in favour of anthroposophical Spiritual Science before being willing to advocate it; all that is necessary is compassion for men who need these thoughts and ideas because they are creative powers in the life of soul, because it is ordained that in times to come, what the human being considers himself to be, that he will become. This development is part of the wise guidance of worlds, in order that the human being may attain full and free consciousness of the Self. On the one side the Gods were bound to make it possible for man to become what he makes of himself; and in order that he might imbue this self-created being with super-sensible meaning, that he might be able to find in this self-created being, something that gives him an eternal aim — in order that this might be, Christ Jesus fulfilled the Mystery of Golgotha. And when man understands Christ Jesus in the light of Spiritual Science, in the light of true thought, he finds the way to Him: the way which leads out from the animal into the Divine.

There is one truth that stands out strongly when the eyes of the soul are able to look into the world entered by the human being after death. Those who were born before 1879 always carry with them a certain heritage which protects them from becoming purely that which, here on Earth, they have pictured themselves to be. And for a long time still — these things are only gradually approaching — for a long time still this protection will be possible, but only through pain, only when men can suffer, when, to speak paradoxically, they can take on themselves the pain of knowing and feeling in themselves the shortcomings of their conception of man. Harmony with the Self, together with a knowledge which lets man after death be truly *man*, — this will arise for future times only if human beings become aware, here, in the physical body, of their true connection with the spiritual world. Those who are afraid of concrete facts of spiritual knowledge because of their materialistic ideas will, of course, for a long time yet be unwilling to acknowledge that any such change took place in the year 1879; nevertheless it will have to be acknowledged sooner or later. It is clear from this that one thing, above all, is essential and will become increasingly so in the future, namely, that all available spiritual knowledge shall spread over the Earth. Therefore in order to further their aims, the Spirits of Darkness will attach particular value to the breeding of confusion among men so that they will not succeed in forming the right thoughts and ideas into which, after death, they are transformed. What man thinks himself to be, that he is obliged to become.

This is a truth that was destined, after the great changes in the nineteenth century and from then onwards, to find its way to men. The human being must be *voluntarily* anything that he can be really; he must be able to think about his own being if he is to be truly himself in his life of soul. For even now the Dead could announce as a ripened truth: The soul is what it thinks itself to be. At the time when it was necessary, from the stage of the Earth to spread the truth: The soul is what it thinks itself to be, at that time Spirits of Darkness inspired human beings to announce the following: "Man *is*

what he *eats*." And although this is not, in theory, widely acknowledged, the practical conduct of life amounts very nearly to being an acknowledgment of the principle that man is what he eats — that and nothing else. Indeed this principle is more and more being applied and developed in external life. To a far greater extent than people believe, the grievous and tragic events of the present time are an outcome of the tenet: Man is what he eats. In a much deeper sense than is supposed by the superficial modern mind, a terrible amount of the blood that is shed today, is shed over unseemly issues. Humanity is already infiltrated by the principle that "man is what he eats." And it gives rise, indirectly, to much contention.

That is why the spread of thoughts and ideas corresponding to the realities of the times is so very necessary. Thought will gradually have to be known as a concretely real power of the soul, not merely as the miserable abstraction produced so proudly by the modern age. Men living in earlier times were still linked, by an ancient heritage, with the spiritual world. Although for many centuries now, atavistic clairvoyance has almost entirely ebbed away, this heritage still lives in the feeling and in the will. But the time has come when everything that is *conscious* must become a real power — hence the Spirits of Darkness strive to counter really effective thoughts by abstract thoughts in the form of all kinds of programmes for the world. This connection must be realised and understood. Thoughts must be imbued with greater and greater reality.

There are still many people who say: "Oh, well, in all good time we shall discover what transpires after death; why trouble about it now? Let us attend to the requirements of life and when we reach yonder world we shall soon discover what it is." Well and good, but if it is true that in yonder world a man becomes what he has pictured himself to be, then something else is also true. Take the idea that is not at all uncommon nowadays. Somebody dies, leaving relatives behind him. Although thought may not be entirely lacking in these people, they may be materialistically minded, and then, quite inevitably, they will think either that the dead man is decaying in the grave or that what still exists of him is preserved in the urn. Only if thought is entirely absent can men be materialists and *not* hold this view. If materialism were to triumph, the conviction would still further increase that all that remains of the Dead is disintegrating in the urn or in the grave. This thought is, however, a real power; it is an untruth. When those left behind think that the Dead no longer lives, is no longer there, this is a false thought — but it is real and actual in the souls of those who form it. The Dead is aware of this thought-reality, is aware of its significance for him. And it is by no means a matter of no consequence but, on the contrary, of fundamental importance, whether those left behind cherish in their souls the thought of the Dead living on in the spiritual world, or whether they succumb to the woeful idea that the Dead, well, he is dead, he lies there decaying in the grave. Far from being a matter of no importance, there is a very great and essential difference.

Coming to Zürich nowadays one can hardly fail to be attentive to what is known here — and also elsewhere, but here it is pursued very actively — as Analytical Psychology, Psychoanalysis. It is of course the case that the psycho-analysts have become alive to many things pertaining to the realm of soul-and-spirit; they are indeed beginning to think of the soul-and-spirit simply because it confronts them so insistently. Let me here say a word or two about one characteristic feature in this Psychoanalysis.

A patient suffers from symptoms of hysteria. The forms taken by these manifestations of hysteria are very typical at the present time and for this reason attract attention. Illnesses particularly common at any given period are always a matter of concern, and efforts are made to discover where the causes lie. Psychoanalysis has actually reached the point of stating that the causes of these frequent manifestations of hysteria lie in the life of soul. As it is quite impossible to look for them in the material domain, or in the field of physiological or biological processes as such, they must lie in the Psyche — in the life of soul. The tendency of the times is to seek in the subconscious life of soul

for causes of the various forms of hysteria. The psychoanalysts say: "Such and such a man shows signs of hysteria; the cause is that something is working in him below the threshold of his consciousness and is constantly surging upwards like waves from subterranean, sub-psychic depths — and that *is* what we must look for."

This is where the dangerous game begins. The psychoanalysts try to find all kinds of happenings which constitute an isolated, subterranean, hidden province of the Psyche, as they put it; in an hysterical subject of the age of 30, they look for "perversions" at the age, perhaps, of 7, which were not fully lived through or satisfied then and of which he must be made conscious again, because this will cure him and so forth. It is a game with extremely dangerous weapons, my dear friends! Out yonder on the physical battlefields, war is being waged with very dangerous weapons. Here, in many domains, with weapons of knowledge no less dangerous, a game is being played because people are not willing to deepen their thought in the sense of Spiritual Science and so to acquire a true understanding of these phenomena. The problem is approached with inadequate means of knowledge and it is a very dangerous game. It is, of course, perfectly true that the Subconscious works in many people today, without ever rising into consciousness. But what the psychoanalysts believe they have unearthed is usually of the least significance of all and, for this reason successes so far as cures are concerned are in most cases highly dubious. When hysteria in a lady of 30 is put down to some sexual perversion which occurred, say, at the age of 14 and has gone on simmering in the Subconscious — this is probably the most unimportant factor of all. In some few cases it may actually be correct and then, if its importance has been wrongly estimated, it will be all the more misleading. But it is absolutely true that countless factors lurk within human beings today, trouble them and give rise to the diseases of modern civilisation.

Think of what I said before. The thought of the absent Dead dwells in some way in the soul although little attention is paid to it; the thought dwells there because the soul today is still heedless — and is rather susceptible to these heedless thoughts. According to an eternal law, the Dead is then forced to dwell with these thoughts; the Dead haunts the soul of the one who is still living. True contact with the Dead can only be established by knowing: "the Dead lives!" And human beings on the physical plane will be more and more prone to psychological illnesses as a consequence of the prevailing disbelief in the existence of the Dead. The causes of these hysterical manifestations are not, as a rule, early sexual troubles but unbelieving thoughts. For thoughts in our age are destined to become powers — in more senses than one. They work as powers of thought *per se*, in that after death the soul takes on a stronger and stronger likeness to what, in the body, it pictures itself to be; but in a higher sense still, thoughts become real powers in that they fetter beings — the Dead in this case — in a wrongful way to the living. Only by sustaining the thought that the Dead lives on, can man guard himself, as well as others, against the link with the Dead becoming a source of danger to those who have been left behind — and in a certain sense the same applies to the Dead himself, who under an eternal, wisdom-filled law is compelled to lurk in the survivor in such a way that this influence remains in the Subconscious and manifests, ultimately, as illness.

Ask yourselves now: What will be the real remedy for many of the phenomena confronting the psychoanalysts today? The universal remedy, the universal therapy will be the spread of knowledge of the spiritual world — not these individual treatments.

Life demands of us that we shall abstain from the thought: here one has to devote oneself to physical existence only and the world of post-mortem existence will reveal itself all in good time. For this also is true: just as our life here is important for the existence into which we pass between death and a new birth, so too the life of souls living between death and a new birth is important for the soul living here on Earth.

What I have now said refers to *one* thought — namely, the thought of disbelief in the existence of the Dead. But the Dead are and should be connected by many links with the living. The link of which I have just spoken is improper, but there are many true links which must be there and which constitute the right connection with the spiritual world. Anthroposophical Spiritual Science strives to establish the true connection, for the life of men together on the Earth will only take its rightful course in the future, if this true relationship is established with the spiritual world. Failing this, it will become increasingly possible for certain individuals to embark upon intrigues and machinations of the kind of which I spoke last Tuesday, in order to usurp for themselves power over others.

Of one thing let us be quite clear. It is only possible to understand the deeply symptomatic events now proceeding in the East (of Europe) when we have a clear, inner conception of the nature of those lands and peoples. Think of what we have been saying for many years about the qualities of the peoples there as a basis for the Sixth Post-Atlantean epoch. Only then can light be shed on all the difficult events and confusing influences that quite inevitably come from those Eastern lands. For, in effect, from what is happening there, something altogether different must in the course of time evolve. This, which is destined to evolve, is not so easy for the people of our time with their comfortable ways of thought to understand; no wonder they are taken aback by what happens there from day to day. But the important point is: to find the right way into all the streams and currents that are arising at the present time and will arise in the future. And little by little the right way is found when Spiritual Science is our guide to knowledge and understanding of the spiritual world. Thereby, too, the right relationship with the spiritual world is established.

In the last lecture here I told you of an improper relationship to the spiritual world that it is the aim of certain quarters to establish. I said that certain individuals are deprived of life here and sent into the spiritual world as the outcome of deliberate machinations; they have not, therefore, wholly lived out their life here and are still able to turn certain forces to account in the world where they live between death and a new birth. And then certain brotherhoods working with dishonourable motives, desiring only to satisfy their own lust for power, can use mediums for the purposes of receiving from the Dead the knowledge which the Dead have thus been enabled to acquire.

Occult brotherhoods of this kind are also, as a rule, those that lead men astray in regard to the events of greatest importance in the spiritual world. When I tell you that in 1879, in November, a momentous event took place, a battle of the Powers of Darkness against the Powers of Light, which ended in the sense of the picture of Michael overcoming the Dragon ... then the point is not, simply to tell you: such and such an event took place. For you can read in many books — it is not an esoteric truth at all — that such an event is appointed in world-evolution. What I really want to bring home is the significance of the event and the attitude that you should adopt towards it. Eliphas Levi, Baader, Saint-Martin, all knew and spoke of such an event — there is nothing really esoteric in the fact itself. But in our time, endeavours are on foot to spread confusion about such events — wherever possible, a confusion that makes men regard them as mere superstition, although they have already been proclaimed by ancient learning. Here, again, is a reason why correct and true ideas about these things are so important.

There exists today a right and proper path of approach to the spiritual truths, which since 1879 have been filtering down from the spiritual to the physical world. It is the path indicated by Spiritual Science. And if in the stream of Spiritual Science there is no deviation from sincerity and purity of intention, Spiritual Science will lead to the establishment of the right relationship between the physical and the spiritual worlds. But what is attained thereby, and must arise among men, involves and demands strenuous effort. Laziness in all its many forms must be put away. Strenuous effort is essential. When mention is made of impulses which, coming from the spiritual world, also work in the shaping of the future ... well, then people come and say: "I want to know this or that specific detail."

What they like best of all, nowadays, for example, is that one should give them a detailed description of what will happen in 1920 as the result of the present war. They do not understand that knowledge of the future ought not to be burdened with such detailed delineations, although this knowledge of the future can be absolutely reliable and effective. That is so terribly difficult to understand.

Let me make myself clear by means of a comparison. You will say: "Really that is unintelligible: he states on the one hand that details damage knowledge concerning the future, and on the other hand that one ought to pay attention to this knowledge because it speaks correctly about the future." I want to make this point clear by means of a simple and trivial analogy. There are bad chess players and good chess players. Set a bad player down in front of a board and he will make bad moves and lose the game. A good player will get more opportunities and will win the game. The bad chess player simply makes the wrong move and the good player the right move, at the given moment. But does the good player apply his mind to detailed deliberation of the actual moves that the other player will make later on? Is it necessary for him, if he is a good player, to know now what moves the other player will make in two hours time? No, it is not! But that does not mean that his skill — the skill of a really good chess player — is ineffective. He will do what is the right thing for the future, because he knows the right moves and, if he has no such insight, he will make the wrong moves; but he is inevitably exposed to the free will of the other player. One cannot, therefore, ask: What is the good of being able to play chess really well, if the other player is always there? It is a very great help indeed to be able to play chess well! If you will ponder over this comparison, I am sure you will see what I mean.

The analogy will serve at the same time to point the truth of what everyone versed in occult matters of this kind will tell you, namely, that the moment a man draws his impulses for action in the physical world, from the spiritual world, he must be prepared to encounter other spiritual Powers; there are the "other players" to be reckoned with; there is no open field before him where he can just do what he has planned. That is the inconvenient fact! Suppose you have some knowledge of occult impulses, of impulses deriving from the spiritual world and then try — in the world of politics, let us say — to turn them to real account. If you are typical men of the present day, you will prefer everything to run smoothly and automatically so that you can have it all under control. But if you want to turn spiritual impulses, occult impulses to account in the physical world, you will have to reckon everywhere with the free will not only of men here on Earth, but also of higher Beings. In other words, with conditions as they are at present, you must not reckon upon having a free field before you; you must realise that the field is already crowded.

And so it is a matter of acquiring through genuine Spiritual Science, correct knowledge, for example of the character of the Sixth Post-Atlantean epoch which is preparing in the East, and of putting the right occult impulse into action at the right moment, just as the chess player must make his move according to that of the other player. What is really necessary is that a man shall deepen his understanding of the spiritual world and learn to do the right thing in each individual case. A recovery of spiritual vitality, unbroken effort and exertion — that is what is necessary, not all these overlapping, abstract programmes. Humanity today likes to have abstract programmes, likes best of all to condense into four or five paragraphs what should be done all over the world, so that delegates appointed by all the nations may vote in a kind of World Court of Arbitration on what has to come about on Earth in accordance with a rule accepted once and for all. But what is really necessary is that men shall seek for knowledge of the spiritual world, shall seek lasting union with the spiritual powers.

But this is connected also with something else, namely, that you must reckon with the other powers in the field. You cannot merely rely on your own power; you must reckon with the others. The quest of power as such is, of course, ruled out. Impulses truly derived from the occult world will

assuredly be right and will produce the right effects, but they will never be at the disposal of mere impulses of power. That would be out of the question.

What will one do on the other hand if one does want to serve mere impulses of power? Then one will act quite differently, trying to gain knowledge of the future by such improper means as I described last time, where mediumistic revelations about the future were elicited from souls who had first been precipitated through the Gate of Death in such a way that they might still make use of earthly forces. In this way, certain occult brotherhoods acquired knowledge concerning the relation of West and East, and on the basis of this knowledge all sorts of machinations were set on foot, the effects of which go on to this day. Knowledge of this kind, placed at the disposal of the lust for power, always has some particular object in view. If you acquire knowledge of occult forces in a right and honest way, all you will do in human life will at the same time be reckoning with the Angel-Beings, with every single Angelos of every one of the human beings concerned. You know the human beings in regard to whom you apply occult truths are in relation to the spiritual world. Every one of them, a living soul, has his connection with the spiritual world. You look on them as living beings. So should the West be dealing with the East — open always to what may arise, reckoning with the "other players" as with living beings — reckoning in effect with the Angels who guard the individuals concerned. This is found inconvenient. This kind of influence the Ahrimanic Powers want to do away with; they want mere power to prevail. And they can only achieve their end by such illicit means as I described last time, whereby they seek to gain possession of the forces leading on into the future. Our time is suffering great harm, in that the forces that were acquired in this way play their part in events. Hence the first task of the honest seeker after truth today is to convince himself of the existence of these evil forces and moreover that a right working into the future can be achieved only by finding access to these true impulses, which can be sought for in the sincere, straightforward ways of Spiritual Science.

Truly, the service to be rendered by Spiritual Science is by no means one-sided — for it is rendered both by the Living and the Dead. This is a solemn, serious matter. And as friends in Zürich are proposing to take steps to introduce spiritual Science in certain chosen circles, I have felt it necessary, in our Society here, to speak of these very serious aspects of spiritual knowledge in our time. That opposing powers are at work in manifold ways is to be observed even within our own Society. Think, too, of all that has been going on, really ever since this war began, in the way of calumny, of suspicion as to my own intentions and those of a few others! Here, too, of course, inimical powers are playing a part.




The very way in which we have spoken in these lectures will show you that our age sorely needs a renewal of spiritual life, needs to be wakened from a certain condition of sleep. There are so many who think that peace will come after the war and then it will all be over and done with. By no means! The events of the present time are portentous signs. To those who will not deepen their knowledge of Spiritual Science these signs will remain unintelligible. And because the times are so grave, because it will become more and more difficult to fight even such a battle as friends here have to fight before work can be done, I want to express my special, personal gratitude — it is a gratitude which comes, too, from Spiritual Science — that friends in Zürich have taken up the struggle so warmly and so effectively against unfavourable conditions and have been undaunted in their efforts to find opportunities for lectures. Thus it has actually been possible for the aim of friends in Zürich to be fulfilled at this time, when on account of the ever-increasing obstacles, such opportunities are hard to come by. I want to stress the fact that these difficulties will grow. And as in the immediate future we shall certainly have to think about making good use of the time still remaining open to us for the arrangement of meetings, I do not want to leave unexpressed my thanks for the great efforts

made in connection with the public lectures and these two lectures to the Members here. Later on, when we look back over events, it will assuredly seem significant that now, at a time of such tragic world events, we could be together and speak together as we have done.

And so, with the impulses of Spiritual Science, we will continue to work, trying to make the best of what can be wrested from the difficult conditions of the times, in the conviction which arises from a true understanding of Spiritual Science, that, insignificant as it may appear within the great stream of tragic, devastating happenings today, we are doing something of great and incisive importance for the times. The things we do in this way flow into the stream of events. Although this may still not be very apparent today, it has significance, nevertheless. If we are filled with this thought it will give us the strength to go further and it will contain in itself the power to ray out into the times. Our age must assimilate such thoughts. Let us live in this conviction as in a spiritual atmosphere! It can arise in us in very truth if we understand Spiritual Science aright.

In this sense, my dear friends, we will remain together.

Notes

1.  Note by Translator: The date of the assassination was 10th September, 1898. "*Propagandisten der Tat*" seems to have been a phrase in current use at that time. In modern books of reference, this assassination and that of Carnot, of which mention is made later, are attributed to revolutionary anarchists.
2.  Carnot was the fourth President of the Third French Republic. He was assassinated at Lyons on 24th June, 1894.
3.  "Anthroposophy and Natural Science." 12th November, 1917.

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